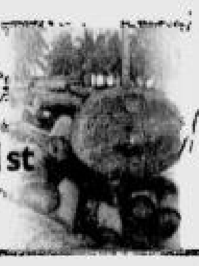
■ World / A10
Italy to withdraw troops from Iraq by September

■ Metro / A23
Report a pothole to DPWH; text hotline 2920

■ News / A2
200 NGOs to fight mining, logging, hold 1st nature seminar today



■ Business / B1
RP balance-of-payments surplus hits $962M in February

■ INQTV SPECIAL
Sapat ba ang paghahanda ni Manny Pacquiao? TONIGHT, AT 10:30, ON ABC!

Benguet executives want Bantay to wear dog tag

BUTI NA LANG WALANG ID PICTURE.. PANGIT ANG MGA ID PICTURES

By Delmar Cariño
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Dog tags are for soldiers, but two officials here want dogs to wear them too.

BENGUET/ A7

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Thursday, March 17, 2005 ★★ 60 pages / 5 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 99 P18
website: www.inq7.net

Don't take communion, 'Ligtas Buntis' workers told

By Ryan D. Rosauro
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Philip C. Tubeza *in Manila*

OZAMIZ CITY—Religion is now a primary factor in the controversy over the government's family planning program.

Or at least it should be, according to a

DON'T/ A22

22 Abus buried as 'martyrs'

They were shrouded in white cloth to signify purity

By Jocelyn R. Uy

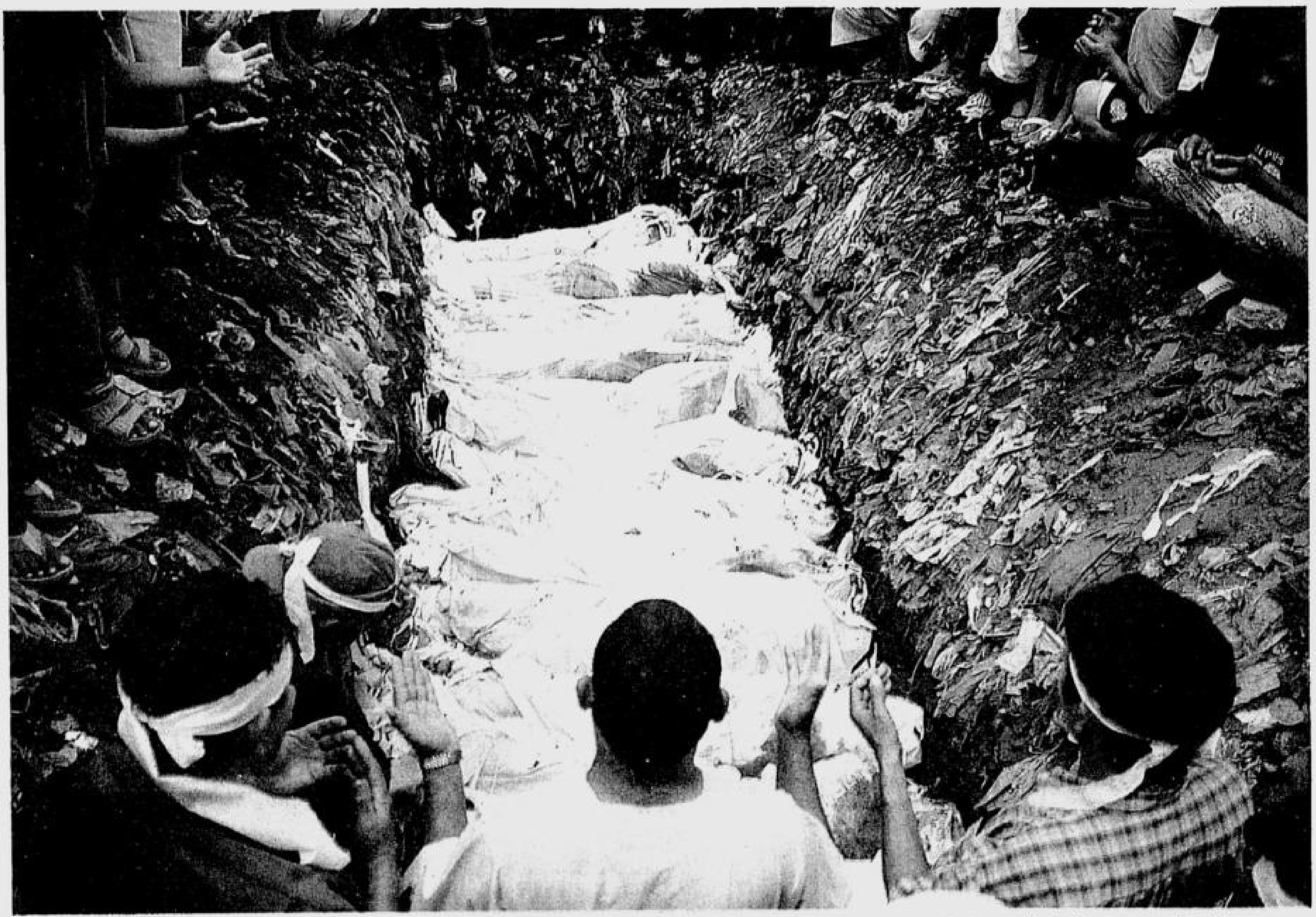
TO MANY, the 22 were plain bandits. To their relatives, they were martyrs and buried them as such.

Two of them had been accused of beheading hostages in the days when they terrorized civilian communities. One was linked to the torching of a Zamboanga del Sur town in which more than 50 people were killed.

Abu Sayyaf leaders Alhamzer Manatad Limbong (Commander Kosovo), Ghalib Andang (Commander Robot) and Nadzmi Sabdula (Commander Global) shared the same grave at the burial of 22 Muslim inmates gunned down by police in Tuesday's shootout which ended a 27-hour standoff at the Camp Bagong Diwa jail in Bicutan.

A 23rd inmate was also killed in the fighting but Muslim Congressman Mujiv Hataman

22 ABUS/ A8



MARTYRS, or so they are considered by the Muslims in the Maharlika Village, Bicutan, where the bodies of the Abu Sayyaf prisoners, including commanders Kosovo, Global and Robot, killed at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology are buried on Wednesday. The bodies were released after midnight Tuesday from the jailhouse and it took two ambulances shuttling at least three times to Maharlika Village to prepare for their burial at the Imam Moh Kusim Memorial Park. JOSEPH AGCAOILI

Ex-Sipadan hostage says Robot's death richly deserved

JOHANNESBURG—A South African man held hostage with his wife for four months by notorious Abu Sayyaf leader Ghalib Andang (Commander Robot) said Andang's death was richly deserved.

"He probably got the death he was seeking. I suppose in the end he got what was coming to him," said Callie Strydom, who was abducted with his wife on their honeymoon in Malaysia and held for 127 days in 2000 in Sulu.

Andang and 22 others were killed on Tuesday when police stormed their jail to end a one-day prison revolt.

Strydom told the Star newspaper that Andang had a mercurial nature.

EX-SIPADAN/ A8

Kosovo took orders from us, says Abu leader

By Arlyn dela Cruz
Contributor

HE MIGHT have been a tough Abu Sayyaf commander but Alhamzer Manatad Limbong—or Kosovo—was acting only under orders coming from the jungles when his group seized control of the Camp Bagong Diwa jailhouse.

This was the claim made by Abu Soliman, operations chief and spokesperson of the Abu Sayyaf Group, who said Kosovo's actions had the blessings of his comrades outside prison.

"They had to be informed first," Soliman told this reporter.

Soliman also said he believed Kosovo and the other ASG leaders who died during Tuesday's police attack were actually executed by the raiders.

He said that Ghalib Andang (Commander Robot) and Nadzmi Sabdullah (Commander Global), who were among those killed, were not part of the core group that seized the jailhouse.

Soliman warned that the next actions of his group—blamed for the Valentine's Day bombings in three cities and several other previous terror attacks—would be "bolder and wider and would not choose targets."

KOSOVO/ A8

MICHAEL RAY AQUINO: US authorities lack a warrant to arrest him in New York. PDI PHOTO

Lacson aide arrested in US, says NBI

FUGITIVE ex-police superintendent Michael Ray Aquino, charged with involvement in the Dacer-Corbito double murders, among other crimes, has allegedly been arrested in New York City for an immigration violation.

National Bureau of Investigation Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz yesterday told reporters of Aquino's purported arrest on Tuesday.

"We still do not know for what reason, but competent sources in the United States said Aquino was nabbed by US law enforcers for what could possibly have been

LACSON/ A22

Pacquiao fight blockbuster in Vegas

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—The Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales showdown at MGM Grand has been classified a blockbuster four days before its staging on Saturday evening (Sunday morning in Manila).

The bout, strongly predicted to be a slugfest based on the courage and styles of the combatants, is perceived to be a "dead-end match-up."

With the brisk demand for tickets, the event was declared a box-office success.

The demand for media accreditation has been so overwhelming that organizers had to turn down a host of regular applications.

This was taken as a gauge that Saturday's blockbuster has reached the level of popularity of Oscar de la Hoya fights, said Aimy Zophie, head media coordinator.

Morales, a native of Tijuana and a Mexican ring icon, commands a strong walk-up crowd.

But Pacquiao's startling credentials, not to mention his fiery, non-stop style, have fueled interest in the showdown.

Previously, MGM Mirage odds opened with Pacquiao a minus-130 favorite.

PACQUIAO/ A22

"THE GU ' remembered and his leadership legacy anchored on simplicity, a strong sense of integrity and a no-nonsense approach to life and governance.

Magsaysay: Guerrilla days prepared him for presidency

By Mila Magsaysay-Valenzuela

(Editor's Note: On his 48th death anniversary, President Ramon Magsaysay is remembered by his daughter as a guerrilla leader in Northern Luzon during Wold War II, who helped pave the way for the liberation of Manila from the Japanese forces 60 years ago.)

"IF AFTER attacking the Japanese, it is shown that I have brought disaster upon my fellow citizens of Zambales, I want you to bring my wife and three children with me—if I am still alive, into the square before our Catholic church in Castillejos. Have a firing squad shoot us there. My crime will be that I brought disaster and hardship upon you."

I was too young to understand the harshness of the challenge posed by my father before the people of Castillejos, Zambales, in 1945, but I remember that one by one, with heads bowed, they sadly left.

It was as if I was witnessing the scene when Jesus challenged those who were without sin to cast the first stone on Mary Magdalene.

I learned later that my father was left with no choice but to come up with that agonizing decision.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur sent an order to clear the beaches of Zambales because the US Army 11th Corps was to land there. As Zambales Military District commanding officer at the time, my father was directed to destroy the San Marcelino airfield,

MAGSAYSAY/ A22

75-year-old detainee didn't know what hit him

By Fe Zamora

OBLIVIOUS to the danger around him, inmate Hadji Ahmad Opao stood up at the burst of gunfire, never knowing he would be felled by a hail of bullets.

Opao, 75, who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, was one of 22 Muslim inmates who perished when crack troops attacked the prison compound of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in Bicutan.

"He wets his bed. We worked for his release last year for humanitarian reasons. The Department of Justice didn't want to," said Amirah Lidasan, secretary general of the Moro Christian People's Alliance.

Opao could have not possibly taken part in the failed jailbreak, according to a social worker who had visited the prisoners before the siege.

"He was bedridden most of the time. He could hardly walk," Karapatan social worker Aya del Reyes said about Opao, whose son-in-law, Muktar Abukhair, was also among the dead.

According to Lidasan, 73 of the more than 120 Abu Sayyaf suspects detained in the Bicutan jail were victims of a government crackdown in Basilan following the

75-YEAR-OLD/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly clourainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/06/28/02

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Second FRONTPAGE

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Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

200 NGOs to fight mining, logging

Kalasag coalition to hold 1st nature summit today

By Blanche S. Rivera

SOME 200 nongovernment organizations have formed a coalition to fight mining and logging operations in the Philippines.

"Because of its desire to raise revenues, the government has effectively launched a war against the environment," organizers of the Kalikasan ay Sagipin (Kalasag) coalition said in a statement.

They said gains made by the environmentalists to protect the environment were being threatened by the government's failure to exercise efficiently its regulatory powers and by its willingness to relax environmental policies to address the fiscal crisis.

Kalasag, which is scheduled to open the first civil society summit on environment at the Ateneo de Manila University today, is led by groups such as Greenpeace, Haribon, Foundation for the Philippine Environment, Legal Rights Resource Center, Tanggol-Kalikasan and Tambuyog.

Besides logging and mining, the summit will tackle renewable energy, waste and pollution, and fisheries and agriculture.

Joel Pagsanghan, national coordinator of CODE-NGO, the biggest network of NGOs in the country, said the five issues were very urgent.

"We are involved in a major environmental struggle today… These are crises waiting to happen. We're trying to come together for a common action plan and broad engagement with the government," Pagsanghan said.

Kalasag, through the LRC, is readying an alternative Mining Act that will be filed in Congress.

The LRC led the group of NGOs that questioned the constitutionality of the Mining Act of 1995 before the Supreme Court almost a decade ago.

The effectivity of the law was suspended until last year when the Supreme Court upheld the provision allowing foreign firms to explore the country's mineral resources.

"The Mining Act forces us to go back to, literally and figuratively, guerrilla warfare. The battle now is from community to community," Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel said.

"It is much like what we have been doing. Unfortunately this time, the policies covering our struggle are gone," she said.

Haribon is focusing its efforts on pushing for a total commercial log ban and has launched a campaign to gather one million signatures.

Citing a study by the Environmental Science for Social Change, Haribon advocacy officer Ester Batangan said the country would have a mere six percent of its forest cover left by 2010.

Batangan said the country needed 54 percent forest cover on every island to restore the ecological processes supported by the forest.

Dina Umengan of Tambuyog raised the issue of mangrove destruction due to the unethical and unregulated establishment of fish ponds. She said her group had lost count of the areas devoted to aquaculture.

"It would be extremely naive not to discuss the political economy related to the environment… The summit would not be all about the problems we face now but the solutions we can propose to address those problems," Pagsanghan said.

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Mike Defensor inspects drums allegedly containing toxic wastes in Binangonan, Rizal, Wednesday. JOAN BONDOC

Rizal firm accused of dumping toxic waste in Laguna Bay

By Blanche S. Rivera

TWO EMPLOYEES of a Rizal-based toxic-waste treatment plant have denounced the dangerous practices of the March and June Environmental Management Corp. which they accused of dumping hazardous wastes and chemicals in the Laguna de Bay or burying them underground, risking the contamination of the water supply.

"I could not take it anymore. I have many relatives in Angono. I know I'm risking my life with this exposure, but I have thought about this for a year and I want to disclose the illegal practices of that company," said Cordeniano Congreso, a resigned backhoe operator, at a press briefing at the environment department yesterday.

Congreso and Fernando Silabay, a truck driver, yesterday submitted affidavits to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources detailing the allegedly illegal practices of the Angono-based March and June which provides waste treatment services to various automotive, drug and electronics companies in Metro Manila and Laguna.

March and June picks up the toxic wastes from such companies as Toyota, Nissan, Ford, Isuzu, Amcor, Samsung, Sanyo and San Miguel Corp.

Congreso claimed to have buried about 200 drums of chemicals or sludge, six tankers of toxic wastes, including asbestos and fluorescent, and a ten-wheeler truckload of expired drugs from Unilab and Pfizer inside the March and June compound on Don Mariano Avenue in Angono during the three years that he worked for the company.

He said he was asked to mix the metal sludge with the soil in a deep pit and then cement over this hazardous mixture.

March and June did not recycle the wastes as it claimed, but merely put formalin, acid and toxic-waste sludge to make it appear as though the wastes were being recycled, Congreso said.

Silabay, meanwhile, said he would drive the company's employees whose duty was to take the mixture of harmful chemicals to an elevated place and then dump this in a river that goes out to the Laguna de Bay.

Congreso also denounced the company's treatment of its workers. He said his supervisor once fired a 9mm gun at him while he was taking a break from work.

"I know our lives are at risk now. All I'm asking is for you to give us some protection," he said.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor presented Congreso and Silabay before the media yesterday before proceeding to visit the company site in Angono.

Defensor said the DENR would investigate the operations of March and June and another company, Palo China in Mabitak, Laguna, both owned by a certain Angelito Roan.

He said the DENR would revoke the permits to transport hazardous wastes given to the waste-generating companies so they would not be able to give their toxic wastes to March and June.

Clean up RP mine site, pay victims, Placer told

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—Aid and advocacy group Oxfam revived pressure on Placer Dome Inc. on Tuesday to compensate inhabitants of a Philippine island for pollution from a mine the Canadian miner co-owned.

In a report released on Tuesday, Oxfam Australia said Placer Dome should pay to clean up rivers and land on Marinduque Island, which the global relief agency said were polluted by years of copper mining by Marcopper Mining Corp.

Placer Dome owned 39.9 percent of Marcopper until 1997, a year after the mine was shut after a drainage tunnel burst, pumping millions of tons of mine waste into the Boac River on the island province.

Three years earlier, in 1993, a Marcopper mine dam had collapsed, releasing "a flood of metal-enriched silt" into another local river, Oxfam said.

"For more than 20 years, Marcopper dumped millions of tons of toxic mine waste in Marinduque's seas and polluted its rivers," Oxfam said in the 44-page document.

"As a result, people have lost their health, livelihoods and some have even lost their lives," it said.

Placer Dome spokesperson Meghan Brown said the company, which is the world's fifth biggest gold producer, had not seen Tuesday's Oxfam release. But she sent Reuters two letters that the miner had previously sent the aid group, as well as a company backgrounder on its involvement with Marcopper.

The Vancouver, British Columbia-based company said in the documents that it agreed with Marcopper and its controlling shareholder, F Holdings, in 2001 that F Holdings would clean up the Boac River system, with money supplied by Placer Dome.

The firm also said it paid a further $70 million to plug the tunnel, clean the river and help Marcopper repay its debt.

Another $1.5 million was paid in compensation to residents, it said, and a further $735,000 could still be paid.

The company said its "voluntary involvement" with the clean-up of the 1996 tailings spill "is concluded" and told Oxfam to contact mine owner Marcopper. Oxfam said it was "difficult" to figure out who owns Marcopper and F Holdings.

The Oxfam report has been in the works since May 2002, when it said Marinduque residents asked it to take up their case.

Reuters

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House OKs postponement of barangay, SK elections

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE HOUSE approved on second reading Tuesday night a measure seeking the postponement of the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections to 2008.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said the proposed postponement of the synchronized elections scheduled in October would effectively spare the country of another divisive exercise and help reduce the government's budget deficit by P3 billion.

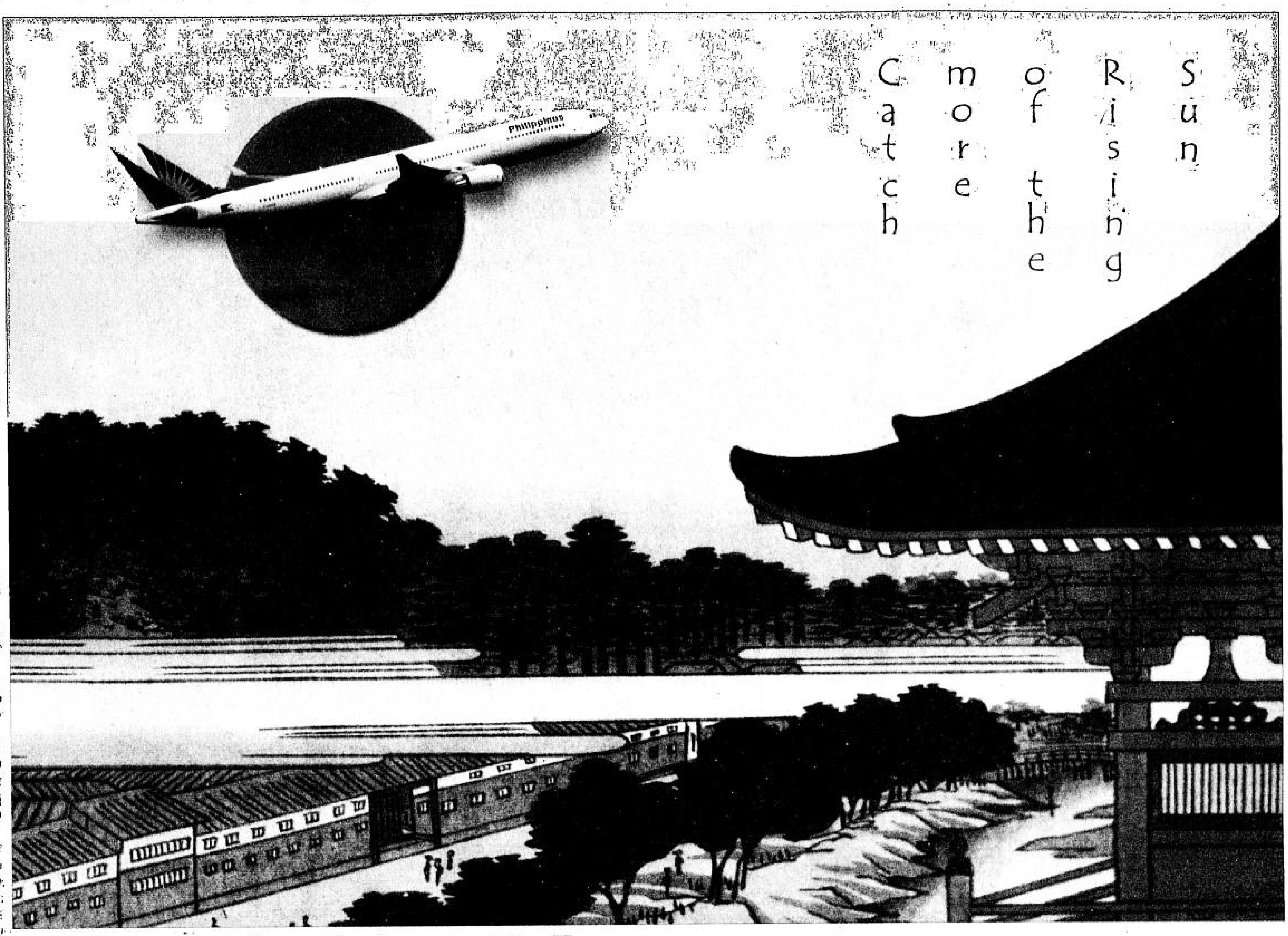
"We need to have a calming effect on the nation as we squarely face financial difficulties. The national government cannot afford to be diverted from its focus on solving the more serious budgetary deficit problem," he said.

The chamber approved with an overwhelming vote House Bill 3742, which sets the synchronized elections on the last Monday of May 2008 and every three years thereafter.

The authors of the bill are De Venecia and Representatives Emilio Macias, Teodoro Locsin Jr., Raul del Mar, Gerry Salapuddin and Emilio Espinosa.

If HB 3742 is not enacted on time, there is a "possibility" that the "orderly conduct" of the elections as well as the "integrity of the results" would not be guaranteed because of "time constraints and funding problems," De Venecia warned.

He thanked the members of the majority coalition and of the minority bloc led by Rep. Francis Escudero for the early passage of the bill.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From idea creation, securing protection to exploitation, commercialization and enforcement of rights, to spawning new ideas, let the experts guide you....

Dir. Epifanio M. Evasco, Director of Patents, Intellectual Property Office (IPO) will discuss the wealth of information in the repository of the the IPO waiting to be discovered and used, and the assistance provided by its staff, to tap this vast resource of knowledge.

Mr. Tomas B. Bri_as is a Division Manager in charge of the Technology Commercialization of the Technology Application and Promotion Institute (TAPI). He will discuss the various assistance programs and services of the DOST available to scientists, inventors and SME's.

Atty. Joey A. Ochave is Vice-President for Business Development at United Laboratories. An author of several articles on biotechnology, he will discuss how Unilab uses patent information to come up with new products, keep abreast of competition, and avoid unnecessary R & D.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the session, participants will be able to:
- Read and understand patent documents
- Conduct more efficient and reliable prior art search
- Have a better understanding of the tests used to determine lack of novelty and obviousness
- Appreciate the importance of patents in promoting innovation, productivity, and sustainable development
- Know the tests for infringement
- Design around a patent without infringing
- Know the steps in securing assistance to commercialize an invention

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US CON AIR

No yellow ribbons await 80 Pinoys in Clark today

THERE will be no yellow ribbons welcoming these homebound Filipinos.

About 80 Filipinos, most of whom were convicted of various crimes in the United States, will be arriving today at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark, according to National Bureau of Investigation Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz.

"This is among the largest group of offenders deported from the US," said Diaz.

Only a few of the deportees are being sent home for violating US immigration laws, he said.

Majority of the deported Filipinos served time in the US for involvement in drugs, sex offenses and illegal possession of deadly weapons, Diaz said.

A multi-agency team from the NBI, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Labor and Employment would be welcoming the group, he said.

Diaz said they would check if anyone in the group has any standing warrants.

"Those who have no warrants of arrest issued against them can go home to their families," he said.

Diaz noted that there has been an increasing number of criminal offenders from the Philippines in the US, judging from the large groups of Filipinos sent home after serving their sentences.

He said the most recent batch of offenders arrived from the US six months ago.

Margaux Ortiz

Fil-Am pleads guilty to having sex with underage boys in RP

LOS ANGELES—A 61-year-old man has pleaded guilty to having sex with underage boys in the Philippines and producing child pornography and is expected to be sentenced to 17 years in prison, authorities said.

Edilberto Datan, a retired state real estate auditor from San Diego, acknowledged that he had sex with eight boys, ages 14 and 15, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement said in a statement Tuesday.

Datan entered his plea March 1 in federal court to one count of engaging in illicit sexual conduct in foreign places and one count of producing child pornography outside the United States, US attorney's office spokesman Thom Mrozek said.

The announcement of Datan's plea was delayed for two weeks. Mrozek said a defense lawyer had asked the judge at the plea hearing to order the government not to announce the case because Datan "would be endangered (in prison) because he was being labeled as a pedophile." The court rejected the defense motion on Friday.

Formal sentencing was scheduled for June 13. The statement said Datan has agreed to a 17-year prison sentence.

Datan had faced four criminal counts after he was arrested Nov. 4 at Los Angeles International Airport while returning from a trip to his native Philippines. Authorities said they found in his luggage about 200 sexually explicit digital images of teenage Filipino boys. More child pornography was found in a search of his home, authorities said.

Authorities said Datan paid Filipino boys for sex with money, clothing and food.

Federal officials began an investigation after Datan's name surfaced during an international investigation into child pornography, authorities said.

Datan was one of about a dozen men from around the nation charged under a law adopted in 2003 that included provisions increasing the penalties for those convicted of engaging in sex with minors overseas. The law also eased the burden of proof for prosecutors.

Datan was the second person convicted under the law. The first was 86-year-old John W. Seljan of Garden Grove, who prosecutors said traveled to the Philippines to molest young girls. He was found guilty in November of six counts and faces at least 10 years and up to 270 years in prison when he is sentenced March 28.

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Threats prompt AFP to revive spy agency

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

GRAVELY concerned with destabilization threats against the government, the military has revived its dormant internal spy unit.

Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu reactivated the AFP Counter Intelligence Group (AFPCIG) on March 1, with marching orders to go after coup plotters and scalawags in uniform.

Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said the top brass realized the need for such a group in view of "recent efforts" by some groups to woo the military's help to topple the Arroyo administration.

Abu also revived the spy group so it could report corrupt military officials, according to Pascual.

"This will not only help preempt any destabilization plans that have military components, but also address other problems such as disloyalty, pilferage and other acts of AFP personnel not in consonance with ethical standards and proper conduct," Pascual said.

He said the AFPCIG's revival was part of the reforms put in place in response to the July 2003 mutiny of the so-called Magdalo soldiers in Makati City. The soldiers who took over the posh Oakwood hotel complained of widespread graft and corruption in the military and in the government.

"One of General Abu's objectives (in reviving the AFPCIG) is to monitor the activities of military officers who handle funds," Pascual said. "They will be the ones to conduct lifestyle checks."

So far the most high-profile case of military corruption is that of former comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia (ret.), who is being tried before military and civilian courts for allegedly amassing ill-gotten wealth while in office.

Col. Gaudencio Pangilinan, former commandant of the Command and General Staff College, would head the AFPCIG. He assumed office last Friday.

According to Pascual, the original AFPCIG was abolished in the early 90s because it did not warn the Aquino administration of the various coup attempts.

Coast Guard places sea marshals on alert

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE PHILIPPINE Coast Guard is not taking any chances.

Yesterday, sea marshals had been placed on heightened alert to thwart possible retaliatory attacks by members of the Abu Sayyaf terror group, whose colleagues were killed in a bloody assault on a prison they seized in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig.

"The sea marshals all over the country have been directed to be extra vigilant in spotting unattended packages and suspicious-looking people given the recent events. They were also instructed to conduct random inspections of ships and port areas," said PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

The PCG's sea marshals are tasked with securing the country's ports and ships from criminal elements or terror attacks. They, along with K-9 units, conduct patrols for explosives, illegal firearms or drugs and inspect passengers and their bags.

To complement this, Balilo said seaborne patrol teams had been deployed to piers to inspect and secure areas beside and around the ships docked at ports.

The task force sea marshals was formed last year after the Feb. 27 SuperFerry 14 bombing that left over 100 people dead or missing. The incident took place shortly after the ship, loaded with over 800 people, left Manila for Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro.

The Abu Sayyaf Group, which had been involved in a string of kidnappings in the past, had claimed responsibility for the bombing believed to be one of the worst terrorist attacks in the country given the number of fatalities.

On Monday, inmates, including high-profile members of the Abu Sayyaf took control of a section of the Camp Bagong Diwa detention after a failed jailbreak attempt. The 27-hour prison standoff, however, came to conclusion when some 100 commandos stormed the building, leaving 22 detainees and one policeman dead.

Storm to hit Samar today

AUTHORITIES raised a storm alert for Eastern Visayas yesterday as a low-pressure area approached from the Pacific Ocean, with winds of up to 95 kilometers per hour.

The government weather forecaster said tropical storm "Roke" was expected to hit Samar and nearby Leyte province late last night or early today.

It warned those living in the storm's path to take precautions and watch for possible flash floods and landslides.

The storm was traveling westward at 30 kph, with winds of 95 kph and gusts of up to 120 kph. *AP*

Benguet execs want Bantay to wear dog tag

From page A1

A dog tag is the small piece of metal worn around the neck by a soldier with his number on it.

Board Members Juan Nazarro Jr. and Aloysius Kato said the tag would help authorities identify the pet owner who could be held liable if the animal harmed or bit a neighbor, visitor or passerby.

"I am a dog meat lover," Nazarro told the INQUIRER. "But I also love dogs as pets. I believe dogs must be properly taken care of by their owners and kept within the yard."

Nazarro and Kato proposed the measure before the Sangguniang Panlalawigan here after they were irked by reports that many dogs in the province were still set loose and unrestrained.

Nazarro said stray dogs "[are] an unlikely sight for a town known for its strawberries and vegetables."

He said he and Kato decided to take the proposal seriously when the provincial veterinarian's office confirmed that many dogs were going astray and that they posed a threat to the public.

"Once these dogs bite someone else, it is very hard to go after the owner because no one knows who owns the dog," Nazarro said.

He wants the proposal be enacted as a provincial ordinance and strictly enforced by all barangays in the province's 13 towns.

Under the proposal, which would be set for public hearing, all dog owners must register their pets every year in the barangay where the owner lives.

The list of registered dogs and their owners from the barangays will be submitted to the town government, which will prepare a master list. The province, which will later be furnished copies of the town registration, will consolidate all the lists.

Registry for dogs

"It is like coming up with a civil registry for dogs," Nazarro said.

He said barangay officials would provide the dog tags.

If approved, the proposal will mandate all dog owners to register their pets within the first 20 days of January every year.

For dogs born after the registration period, the owner must still register them within a month after birth.

Even dogs from other places must comply with the registration, the proposal said.

Any person who enters the province with his or her dog must go to the nearest barangay office and register the animal within five days.

Fine and imprisonment

Asked by the INQUIRER if this covered dogs brought to the province for restaurants and eateries, Nazarro said if the animals were not butchered within five days, then they must be registered.

Those who fail to register their dogs will be fined P2,000 but not more than P5,000.

If the dog bites a person, the owner will be fined P5,000 and will be imprisoned for not more than one year.

"This is to compel dog owners to become responsible dog owners," Nazarro said.

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22 Abus buried as 'martyrs'

From page A1

said he was a Christian.

Anguished Muslim residents buried the 22 slain Abu Sayyaf members at the Imam Moh Kusim Memorial Park in Taguig City, the only Muslim cemetery in Metro Manila.

They were accorded a funeral reserved for martyrs, their wounds unwashed and their bodies shrouded in a plain white cloth. Ordinarily, the body of a dead Muslim is washed before it is buried.

Anak Mindanao party-list Rep. Mujiv Hataman told the Inquirer the families of the slain Abu Sayyaf members had requested that the bodies be buried untouched because they had died as "shahid," the Islamic term for martyr.

Hataman said that the white cloth wrapped around a corpse represented purity.

"They are presumed innocent until proven guilty," explained Sultan Panny Pangandaman, the acknowledged Muslim leader of Maharlika Village in Taguig City where the remains of the 22 Abu Sayyaf members were buried in a mass grave.

Pangandaman, a resident of Maharlika Village for 52 years and its sultan since the 1980s, said it was he, the families of the slain Abu Sayyaf members, the entire Muslim village, and its religious leaders who declared the 22 as martyrs.

"They died without the capability of defending themselves. They were already in jail but still they were gunned down," said Pangandaman, a former member of the Moro National Liberation Front.

He said the three Abu Sayyaf leaders were also proclaimed martyrs because the court had not yet ruled on their guilt.

Andang had been on trial for the kidnapping of foreign tourists from the Malaysian resort island of Sipadan in 2000. Limbong was being held for the bombing of a passenger ferry last year which killed over 100 and the kidnapping of another group of tourists in Palawan in 2001, in which two Americans hostages were killed. Sabdula had been accused of leading the bloody raid on Ipil town in Zamboanga del Sur in 1995.

In Davao City, a group of 20 Muslim clerics covering Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, said a Muslim could only be considered a martyr if he died in the name of Islam.

Sheik Omar Pasigan, speaking for the Darul Ifta (House of Opinion), said Allah had made it clear that only those who fought for the common good of Muslims could be considered martyrs.

"If they died fighting for Muslims, their nation, then they could be considered. Allah said that you defend your faith," Pasigan said.

Muslims who defend their community from aggression may be considered martyrs, he said.

"But if you die as an aggressor, then you may not be considered a martyr," Pasigan said.

Killed like chickens

According to him, those who say they fight in the name of Islam but are involved in criminality such as robbery and kidnapping may not be considered martyrs because they did not do any good.

"But Allah only knows whom to consider as martyrs. This opinion was arrived at after consultation among ourselves," he said.

Mourners said the 22 were killed like chickens.

One woman in the crowd shouted in anger.

"They were in a jail. They are not chickens or pigs," she screamed. "They were humans. They were Filipinos."

As the bodies of Kosovo, Robot, Global and the others were lowered into the ground, their bodies wrapped in white linen and placed on mats, many in the crowd of about 200 to 300 shouted: "Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest)!"

Muslim practice

Robot, Kosovo and Global had been linked to the kidnappings of scores of civilians in the southern islands. Robot and Kosovo were specifically alleged to have beheaded some of their victims.

By tradition, Muslims bury their dead as quickly as possible, preferably before the sun sets on the day of death or within 24 hours after death.

They were buried facing west in the direction of Mecca, birthplace of the prophet Mohammed and spiritual center of Islam.

They were buried as they died, their wounds unwashed as testimony to their "martyrdom," Pangandaman said.

The unwashed wounds and the bloodstains in the white shroud testified to their having died as martyrs, barangay hall staffer Alahbsar Sahijuan said.

Symbol of purity

The 22 bodies were buried in three batches in one common grave. The three Abu Sayyaf leaders were in the first batch.

The inmates had been facing charges of murder, kidnap for ransom and serious illegal detention.

"We are hurt because it was our brothers in Islam who were killed," said a resident who refused to disclose his name.

Many among the mourners said they wanted justice for the 22.

The burial of Ahmad Opao and Muktar Abukhair, father and son-in-law, who were also killed in the police attack, was held separately from the others because the mourners had to wait for the arrival of the victims' families and relatives from Basilan.

Opao's son, 8, looked on helplessly as volunteers filled up the grave with dirt.

Muktar Abukhair's son wept.

Malacañang yesterday said that it was open to the participation of "impartial" parties in the investigation of what happened.

As of now, an investigation had already begun and that the Department of Interior and Local Government was on top of the probe, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

"We would welcome the cooperation and assistance of so-called impartial observers or impartial parties to facilitate the investigation," Bunye told reporters.

He said these impartial observers could make themselves available as "resource persons" to the investigation.

Appeals for calm

Malacañang also appealed for calm amid threats by remnants of the Abu Sayyaf that they would strike back.

"We know that what happened was something that authorities wanted to avoid," Bunye said.

"Things happened because the other side simply did not want to take advantage of the opportunities given to them."

Bunye said Malacañang was confident that the police, military and local government units had adopted measures "to safeguard the occurrence of any destabilizing efforts by such group."

The Moro-Christian People's Alliance (MCPA) said the assault at Camp Bagong Diwa was an overkill.

"The operatives need not spray bullets indiscriminately at the inmates for this will surely hit some innocent inmates used by the Abu Sayyaf Group as human shields," said Amirah Ali Lidasan, MCPA secretary general.

Probe demanded

MCPA is a human rights group involved in social services and working for the release of inmates who were victims of the military crackdown in Basilan in 2001.

House Minority Floor Leader Francis "Chiz" Escudero deplored the parading of half-naked prisoners after the government crushed the inmates' uprising.

Escudero called for a congressional investigation on the incident.

Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., on his part, noted that almost a third of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology's uniformed personnel had no firearms.

Andaya, chair of the House appropriations committee, said the BJMP had a total of 4,202 guns although it had a uniformed force of 6,898. *With reports from Christine Avendaño, Norman Bordadora, Philip Tubeza, Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

US troops going back to Basilan for war games

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

AMERICAN troops are coming back to Basilan next month, three years after their last controversial stay there.

Thirty US Special Forces soldiers are scheduled to hold counter-terrorism exercises with 225 Filipino Army troops in the jungles of Basilan from April 5 to May 4.

Basilan is regarded as the base of operations of the Abu Sayyaf Group, a terrorist organization according to the US.

Dubbed Balance Piston 05-3, the exercise is the latest in the series of US special operations training conducted here.

It is only the second time that US troops will train with their Filipino counterparts in Basilan.

From January to July 2002, about 1,200 US Army Special Forces trained with Filipino troops in the jungles of Basilan at the height of the government's operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

At the end of the exercises, a number of Abu Sayyaf bandits were captured or killed, among them their spokesperson Abu Sabaya.

Some sectors have protested that the exercises are a violation of the constitutional ban against foreign troops in the country.

The 30 participating US soldiers are from the 1st Battalion of the 1st US Special Forces (Airborne).

Ex-Sipadan hostage . . .

From page A1

"One day, when we had been attacked by the Philippine military, he told me he thought I was a good man and if I was wounded, he would carry me through the attack," he recalled.

But then he could be ruthless and "his whole attitude was attuned to war," Strydom said, adding that he had also raped several women hostages.

"He had three wives at least that were there ... Two of them were hostages that eventually became his wives."

Strydom said Andang was not using a doctrine to enrich himself, stressing that he firmly believed in his cause.

"He was definitely not a materialistic man. He did his five prayers every day. Whatever he got in terms of funding or aid—he wasn't a shy man to ask—he would use for his fight.

"That was his whole school of life. He would get hostages, then go on the run hiding from and fighting government forces, taking us with them," he said.

"Then after the hostages would be released, he would be attacked by government forces and the war would continue."

In Germany, former hostage Renate Wallert recalled that Andang had been "relatively human" toward his captives—"even though he flipped out a few times during the kidnapping."

"I'm too much of a Christian to have wished him death," she said.

Her husband, Werner Wallert, said he felt no pity for Andang. "Whether he is in prison or dead makes no difference for me any more," he said. *Reports from AFP, AP*

BJMP director to be probed

By Norman Bordadora

OFFICIALS of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology were kept out of the probe team created by the Interior department to look into the violent incident at Camp Bagong Diwa.

Interior undersecretary for peace and order, Marius Corpus, told the INQUIRER that BJMP Director Arturo Alit is himself the subject of the investigation for his alleged failure to ensure the jail's safety and security especially since terrorists were among the detainees.

Justice department officials formally launched an investigation into the alleged glaring security lapses in the Camp Bagong Diwa jail.

"The major lapse was the failure of the jail guards to follow procedure," Corpus said.

Corpus said the jail guards should not have been carrying guns beyond the first gate of the Special Intensive Care Area where the Abu Sayyaf detainees were kept.

Corpus also mentioned the failure of one of the jail guards to close the first gate after he entered before opening a second gate of the maximum security area.

"The jailbreak was only foiled after the other guards fired back at the detainees who immediately went back to their cells," Corpus said.

The presence of cellular phones—as evidenced by the ASG detainees' phone calls to a radio station to air their demands—inside the Sica is also a serious breach of jail procedure.

Kosovo took orders from us, says Abu leader

From page A1

Soliman said that Kosovo, almost to the end, remained subordinate to his colleagues in the Al-Harakatul Al-Islamiya, the name by which the Abu Sayyaf Group would like to be called.

Wonders of the cell phone

And how did Kosovo get his permission from Soliman and the others?

The simple answer is through conversations by cell phones and through exchanges of text messages, Soliman said.

"When we took our oath to be part of this group, there are only two ends for us, victory or martyrdom," Soliman said.

"For us, Kosovo and the rest got the ultimate victory we are all dying to have and that is to be 'shaheed'," Soliman said.

Shaheed is an Arab term used to refer to the death of a "martyr," or to death in a battlefield in the midst of jihad or holy war.

Ready for death

Four ASG leaders were among the 22 detainees killed in Tuesday's gun battle with police commandos who wrested control of the jail facility after a 27-hour standoff.

Soliman indicated that up to the last 15 minutes before police Special Action Force carried out the attack, Kosovo was still in touch with him.

"They were ready to die and I am sure the SAF who fought them knew that," Soliman said.

He said that when the police forces finally took control of the facility, Kosovo was left to decide on his own what to do but in consultation with seven to 14 others who comprised the core group.

Was the jail takeover really part of an escape plan? What was its purpose?

War of wits

Soliman did not directly answer.

"This is war," he said in Filipino. "It is outwitting the other. There is deception on their part, on our part. It's all part of the battle. Whatever is that operation, someone will gain points. If they thought they gained points, we also believed we gained points."

But Soliman said he was shocked at the number of people who died in the assault. He became more suspicious when the names of those killed were released.

He said Robot, whom police said was killed after he fought it out with the raiders, was not part of the core group led by Kosovo. "In fact, he was one of those against," Soliman said.

Differences with Global

Global was not among those who planned the "operation" inside the BJMP in Taguig, he said.

"Even then, there were many differences with Global and even when he reached jail, he was never a follower," Soliman said.

"May sarili siyang diskarte (he had his own ways). That's why we were surprised why he was killed. Did anyone among you ask if he and Robot had guns?

"I doubt if anyone would raise that question. We are not even expecting such a decency as to raise that question from the Philippine society. We are the villains. Isn't that how you all look at us?"

Deliberate execution

Soliman said his group believed "the assault of the PNP-SAF was a deliberate execution of top ASG commanders and close relatives of the ASG leaders."

Aside from Robot and Global, Soliman mentioned the name of a certain Opao who, he said, was father of one of his "Bro," meaning a member of the Abu Sayyaf.

The brother of Aldam Tilao (Abu Sabaya) was also killed in the assault but in the list of those who were killed, his name was not listed as Tilao, Soliman said.

Lawyer Oliver Lozano told this reporter he was in touch with Andang up to around 5 in the morning of Tuesday—or some four hours before the police attack started.

Robot said he was hungry

Lozano said Andang only complained that he hadn't eaten.

"Robert said he was hungry and that what he knew was that there were still negotiations," Lozano said.

Lozano had acted as legal counsel of both Kosovo and Robot.

Was the Camp Bagong Diwa incident a setback for the Abu Sayyaf?

"No. Our adrenalins even soared. That is like vitamins to us," Soliman bragged.

One thing his group was able to prove, Soliman said, was that civilian Muslims were not spared in government attacks.

"They kept saying that we make no distinctions between civilians and non-civilians. But look at what they did," he said.

75-year-old detainee didn't know what hit him

From page A1

declaration of a "state of lawlessness" in that province in 2001.

Opao's body was recovered on the ground floor, along with 11 other bodies, including that of Ghalib Andang, alias Commander Robot, a notorious Abu Sayyaf leader and believed to have been one of the leaders of the 27-hour prison revolt.

Among the casualties were 17-year-old Ibrahim Hami-jo, and Ahmed Busuan Dael, Gaafar Mundi and Ahmed Arawangsa, who all turned 18 while in prison.

Del Reyes said another casualty was Mohaiser Tillao, who was said to be a brother of Aldam Tillao, also known as Abu Sabaya, the spokesperson of the Abu Sayyaf whom the military claimed was shot in an encounter in the high waters of Sibuco in June 2002.

The casualties were among the 73 suspected Abu Sayyaf members and sympathizers who were shipped from Basilan to Manila late 2001 after the court ordered that the trial be held in Manila.

The 73 inmates were accused of participating in the kidnapping of 52 teachers and pupils in Tumahubong, Basilan, in March 2000.

Why speedy trial difficult

After four years in jail, the inmates had complained that their trial was going nowhere.

In fact, a speedy trial of their cases was one of five demands that the rebel inmates made during the failed negotiations on Monday. They also asked for access to their lawyers.

But lawyer Pura Calleja, who represents the Basilan 73 inmates in the kidnapping trial, said the trial was moving slowly because the case involved 52 complainants and more than 100 accused.

"There are 52 cases here, as every kidnapped victim has filed a separate case," Calleja said.

Sorry state

In fact, Calleja said 25 defendants have yet to be presented in court for direct and cross examination, which would again take time.

Calleja was allowed to enter the prison compound late Tuesday afternoon. Coming out from the compound, Calleja said her clients, who survived the assault, "were in a sorry state."

"They have no clothes, they have not eaten and some appear to have bruises in their faces," she said.

She said one client, Bashir Majirol, was stripped to his briefs despite the fact that he was suffering from advanced tuberculosis. Calleja said Majirol was also partially blind due to advance diabetes.

Another client, Ibrahim Opao, sported a bandaged head, Calleja said.

But the dead looked even sorrier, according to the Karapatan social worker.

Del Reyes said the bodies were only released after midnight. She said two ambulances, making at least three trips each, took the bodies to the Maharlika Village in Bicutan for pre-burial preparations.

She said four inmates bore gunshot wounds in their eyes and faces.

"We are also worried because some of the wounded have not been brought to the hospital," she also said.

Who's hard-core?

Yesterday, Karapatan also called on the Philippine National Police (PNP) to "account who among the casualties in the prison assault were hard-core ASG and who were not."

Hours after the assault, a group of Muslim women trooped to the prison to inquire on the status of their relatives.

Nurhaima Yacub hurried to the Camp Bagong Diwa upon hearing the report that 17 inmates had died. By the time she arrived at the camp, the death toll had risen to 22.

Her husband, Saliah Yacub, was a suspected Abu Sayyaf supporter. "Why don't they tell us the names of those who died so we can plan what to do?" she said, in near exasperation.

Later that night, Nurhaima was told her husband was safe.

Estelita Marcos said poverty was the main reason for the continued detention of her brother-in-law, Eleazar, who was only 23 years old when he was accused of involvement in the kidnapping-for-ransom activities of the Abu Sayyaf.

"We have submitted all documents to show that Eleazar was employed in Zamboanga City at the time when those kidnappings took place, but the case still did not prosper. He is now 27 years old and still in jail. He said if I only have P15,000 to pay a lawyer, I would be free by now," Marcos told the INQUIRER. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

Romulo gets CA nod as DFA secretary

By TJ Burgonio

FOREIGN Secretary Alberto Romulo's nomination was confirmed yesterday by the Commission on Appointments after an intense grilling by senators on issues ranging from the cancellation of Sen. Juan Enrile's visa to the United States to the fate of Roberto Tarongoy and the deportation of undocumented Filipinos from Sabah.

Voting unanimously, members of the CA committee on foreign affairs approved a motion by Rep. Manuel C. Ortega to recommend Romulo's appointment to the plenary session after more than three hours of questioning. He was later confirmed at the plenary.

Romulo's confirmation came more than six months after President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed him to the post. He was twice bypassed.

"The committee highly recommends the appointment of Romulo. He has acquitted himself commendably during the more than three hours of questioning," said Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, chair of the CA committee on foreign affairs.

Also confirmed by the body were Romulo's predecessor, Delia Albert, as ambassador to Germany; Elizabeth Buensuceso, ambassador to Laos; and Acmad Omar, ambassador to Oman; and Reynaldo Villar, audit commissioner.

The CA also confirmed the promotion of Juanito P. Cabayao Jr. to brigadier general; Emmanuel F. Mendoza to colonel, Army; Manuel Natalio A. Abinuman to captain, Navy; Alfonso Evangelista to colonel, Medical Corps; and Durena B. Villegas to colonel, Nurse Corps.

At the hearing, Santiago reminded her colleagues to limit their questioning, if possible, out of courtesy to Romulo, a senator from the 8th to 10th Congress, but this did not stop senators, including former colleagues, from grilling him on a wide range of issues.

ROMULO: Grilled by former colleagues in the Senate

Enrile, who began by saying that he was not opposed to Romulo's appointment, questioned the Secretary on the country's mutual defense treaty and state of relations with the US.

"I don't think it has deteriorated. It's stable; certainly it has to improve," replied Romulo, adding that the Philippines has established links with lawmakers in the US Congress "who are helping us get legislation that we need."

Enrile, whose multiple-entry visa was cancelled by the US Embassy in January for unknown reasons, also questioned Romulo on the fitness of Albert del Rosario to continue serving as ambassador to Washington, D.C.

"If he's such a good ambassador, did he take up the cancellation of visa of one Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile?" he asked. "If he's a good ambassador, how come US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is coming to the region to visit six countries, but the Philippines, an ally of the US and with which it has a mutual defense treaty?"

Romulo explained that Del Rosario had taken steps to rectify the cancellation of the senator's visa, and that Rice was expected to visit Manila soon.

Black Saturday a holiday–Palace

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has declared March 26, Black Saturday, a special non-working holiday.

She said this would give Filipinos the "full and uninterrupted opportunity to ponder on the significance of Holy Week and to properly observe its traditions with religious fervor, without prejudice to public interest."

Black Saturday, which falls on March 26 this year, is sandwiched between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Governments have made a practice of declaring Black Saturday a special holiday throughout the country.

"The observance of Holy Week is one of our people's most cherished traditions," the President said in Proclamation No. 808 signed by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

All government employees, including those in government-owned and -controlled corporations, and private- sector employees, may also be allowed to take March 23, Holy Wednesday, off under certain conditions, the proclamation stated.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, March 17, 2005
5th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Gen 17:3-9
Gospel: John 8:51-59

gJesus said to the Jews, "Truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never experience death." The Jews replied, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died and the prophets as well, but you say: 'Whoever keeps my word will never experience death.' Who do you claim to be? Do you claim to be greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets also died."

Then Jesus said, "If I were to praise myself, it would count for nothing. But he who gives glory to me is the Father, the very one you claim as your God, although you don't know him. I know him and if I were to say that I don't know him, I would be a liar like you. But I know him and I keep his word. As for Abraham, your ancestor, he looked forward to the day when I would come; and he rejoiced when he saw it."

The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?" And Jesus said "Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." They then picked up stoned to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.

Commentary

Jesus is trying to get across to them (us) who he is and the power of life in his words, teaching and person, but they refuse to listen, to obey or to believe in him. Jesus claims life for himself and those who obey him, forever-life beyond death and in spite of death. Jesus knows the Father—and that is life in itself, if only we know the Father, as Jesus did, then we too would have this life unbounding and life stronger than death within us. Jesus declares:

"I know him and I keep his word." And they try to kill him. Anyone who truly stands against those who resist truth and life, will be attacked, but we must seek only one recourse, our protection and one source for our lives—to be able to say with Jesus: "I want to know the Father and to keep his word." May it be so, O Lord.

Claretian Publications Inc., 8 Mayumi St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP P.O. Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City; Tel.: 921-3984; Fax: 921-7429; E-mail: cci@claret.org; Websites: http://www.bible.claret.org (Claretian Publications Inc.) & http://missionaries.claret.org (Claretians in the Philippines)

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CRIMINAL PROCEDURE)/POLITICAL LAW (CONSTITUTIONAL LAW)—Factors to consider in determining whether the accused has been deprived of his right to a speedy trial—A balancing test of applying societal interests and the rights of the accused necessarily compels the court to approach speedy trial cases on an ad hoc basis. In determining whether the accused has been deprived of his right to a speedy disposition of the case and to a speedy trial, four factors must be considered: (a) length of delay; (b) the reason for the delay; (c) the defendant's assertion of his right; and (d) prejudice to the defendant. Prejudice should be assessed in the light of the interest of the defendant that the speedy trial was designed to protect, namely: to prevent oppressive pre-trial incarceration; to minimize anxiety and concerns of the accused to trial; and to limit the possibility that his defense will be impaired. Even if the accused is not imprisoned prior to trial, he is still disadvantaged by restraints on his liberty and by living under a cloud of anxiety, suspicion and often, hostility. His financial resources may be drained, his association is curtailed, and he is subjected to public obloquy. As held in Williams vs United States (250 F.2d. 19 (1957), for the government to sustain its right to try the accused despite a delay, it must show two things: (a) that the accused suffered no serious prejudice beyond that which ensued from the ordinary and inevitable delay; and (b) that there was no more delay than is reasonably attributable to the ordinary processes of justice. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Callejo, Sr., Second Division, Corpuz vs Sandiganbayan, G. R. No. 162214, November 11, 2004]

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Italy to withdraw troops from Iraq

ROME—Leading US ally Italy said on Tuesday it would start withdrawing its 3,000 troops from Iraq in September, in a fresh blow to US President George W. Bush's shrinking coalition.

Bulgaria also called for a partial withdrawal, and Ukraine welcomed home its first wave of returning troops.

The moves come on top of the withdrawal of more than a dozen countries over the last year and could complicate efforts to keep the peace while Iraq's new government builds up police and military units capable of taking over from foreign forces.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, one of Bush's most vocal supporters, said he was in talks with British Prime Minister Tony Blair about a total exit strategy from Iraq, adding people in both countries wanted their troops to return home. Twenty-one Italian soldiers have died in Iraq.

"We will begin to reduce our contingent even before the end of the year, starting in September, in agreement with our allies," said Berlusconi, who faces an election next year and went against public opinion to deploy troops in Iraq.

Asked on RAI state television when a total withdrawal would take place, Berlusconi said: "It will depend on the capacity of the Iraqi government to provide adequate security."

BERLUSCONI

Despite strong opposition at home, Berlusconi sent some 3,000 troops to Iraq—the fourth largest foreign contingent after US, British and South Korean forces.

But pressure has mounted on him to withdraw the troops since intelligence agent Nicola Calipari was killed earlier this month by US soldiers shortly after rescuing an Italian hostage.

The incident has strained Italy's relations with the United States and Bush has promised an investigation.

"(Bush) knows that he can't let down a loyal ally, " said Berlusconi, adding that the killing was a "serious mistake."

Earlier on Tuesday, Bulgaria's president said his country should withdraw its 450 troops from Iraq by the end of this year after a Bulgarian soldier was accidentally killed by US forces. A final decision is expected by the end of the month.

Thirty-eight countries have provided troops in Iraq at one point or another. But 14 nations have permanently withdrawn since the March 2003 invasion, and today's coalition stands at 24. Excluding US forces, there are 22,750 foreign soldiers still in Iraq.

Some 137 Ukrainian servicemen returned home Tuesday, part of a gradual pullout of a 1,650-strong contingent to be completed in October. Ukraine has lost 18 soldiers in Iraq, and its people overwhelmingly oppose the deployment.

The Netherlands formally ended its mission March 7, and the bulk of its 1,400 troops return home this month.

Poland, which has command responsibility for a large swath of central Iraq, plans to withdraw several hundred of its 1,700 soldiers in July and hopes to pull out completely by year's end or early in 2006.

Among the nations that withdrew last year were Spain, which pulled out 1,300 soldiers; Tonga, 44; New Zealand, 60; Thailand, 423; the Philippines, 51; Honduras, 370; the Dominican Republic, 302; Nicaragua, 115; and Hungary, 300. Norway withdrew 150 troops but left 16 liaison officers, and Singapore withdrew 160, but later provided a landing ship tank and crew. *Reuters, AP*

Malaysia now more corrupt, says Anwar

KUALA LUMPUR—Charismatic dissident Anwar Ibrahim has unleashed an unexpected attack on Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, saying Malaysia has become far more corrupt since the scholarly leader known as "Mr. Clean" took over.

"The level of corruption is pervasive, it is much hidden. It is sophisticated," former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in an interview this week.

The allegations come as a surprise because Anwar had initially been full of praise for Abdullah, who took office in October 2003 with a pledge to clean up corruption and allow more democratic space.

"Unfortunately after 1 1/2 years nothing has been done," said Anwar, who is try to revive a political career that was destroyed in 1998 during a bitter feud with then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir sacked Anwar, his protege-turned-foe, from the government and the ruling party after he was arrested for alleged sodomy and corruption. Anwar says he was victimized because he exposed corruption in Mahathir's administration.

He served four years in jail on the corruption charge and another two years for the sodomy conviction, before it was overturned, allowing his release in September 2004.

Anwar said he was aware of massive corruption even when he was deputy to Mahathir, who retired after 22 years in office and passed the reins to Abdullah.

"But what we are witnessing now is far worse. It (corruption) is tolerated and nobody has responded. It is completely ignored," said Anwar. *AP*

Syrian agents complete Beirut pullout

BEIRUT—Syrian intelligence agents moved out of their Beirut headquarters early on Wednesday, witnesses said, a step toward meeting US and Lebanese opposition demands for an end to Syria's tutelage over its small neighbor.

The witnesses said a bulldozer demolished two guard posts, trucks loaded with office equipment drove away and the last intelligence officers left the headquarters in the seafront Ramlet al-Baida district.

The Syrians had also removed pictures of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his late father Hafez from around the building before driving away.

Syria's often feared intelligence apparatus has been a key element in its political and military influence on Lebanon since its troops first intervened early in the 1975-90 civil war.

A Lebanese security source said he expected all Syrian intelligence agents in Beirut, the north and the Mount Lebanon area overlooking the capital, to have moved to eastern Lebanon by Wednesday night. He put their number at 150 to 200.

For now Syrian intelligence retains its Lebanon headquarters in the Bekaa Valley town of Anjar, but the closure of the Beirut office indicated that Syrian forces have almost completed the first phase of a withdrawal from Lebanon announced 10 days ago.

Syria agreed to move its troops after the Feb. 14 killing of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri sparked fierce anti-Syrian protests in Beirut and global calls for the Syrians to leave.

US President George W. Bush called on the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah guerrilla group to prove it was not a terrorist organization by laying down its arms and working for peace.

"We view Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and I would hope that Hezbollah would prove that they're not by laying down arms and not threatening peace," Bush told reporters on Tuesday with Jordan's King Abdullah at his side.

Hezbollah brought out hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of Beirut last week in support of Syria, showing it has massive support in Lebanon. It also has members in parliament and runs charities.

Around 3,000 pro-Syrian students chanting "Death to America" marched on the US Embassy near Beirut on Tuesday, burning Israeli and American flags and denouncing what they say is Washington's interference in Lebanon.

The crowd chanted: "Ambassador leave, keep our country free," in reference to US envoy Jeffrey Feltman.

Scores of Lebanese soldiers and riot police, backed by armored troop carriers, put up metal barricades and barbed wire to keep the protesters away from the embassy complex in Awkar, north of Beirut, but the protest went off peacefully.

Lebanese security sources say the Syrians will complete the first stage of their pullout in the next couple of days. More than 4,000 soldiers returned to Syria last week, while 2,000 more were redeploying eastwards to the Bekaa Valley.

The dismantling of the intelligence headquarters and another Syrian intelligence office in Beirut coincided with a visit to Damascus by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and efforts by Lebanon's pro-Syrian Prime Minister-designate Omar Karami to form a unity government to defuse the political crisis. *Reuters*

UN wraps up probe into Hariri killing

BEIRUT—A United Nations team investigating the killing of former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri in a Feb. 14 bomb blast has completed its probe, officials said on Tuesday.

The head of the UN team, Peter Fitzgerald of Ireland, informed Lebanese President Emile Lahoud that he would leave Beirut Wednesday and travel to New York, where he would submit his report to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the official news agency ANI said.

The United Nations said in New York that Annan would release the report's findings to the Security Council next week, although the world agency did not stipulate a day.

The UN team, comprised of Irish, Egyptian and Moroccan investigators and joined by Swiss bomb experts, has been in Beirut since Feb. 24 gathering information on the killing. Fitzgerald is due to arrive in New York on Thursday.

British daily The Independent said on Monday that Lebanese and Syrian authorities are behind a cover-up of evidence from the blast.

"The UN investigators have become convinced that there was a cover-up of evidence at the very highest levels of the Lebanese and Syrian intelligence authorities," it said.

Veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk, based in Beirut, quoted no sources for his report but said members of Hariri's family had been told the UN report on the death would be "devastating."

The Lebanese opposition has blamed the explosion on the pro-Syrian regime and Damascus and launched a campaign of massive public protests.

Beirut and Damascus have denied any responsibility over the attack, which has unleashed massive public protests against Syria's military presence.

Lebanon agreed to cooperate with the UN commission of inquiry but rejected a full international probe.

Lahoud on Tuesday reiterated his "determination to uncover the perpetrators and those who ordered" the attack. *AFP*

WORLD leaders gather under the conical-shaped roof in the Hall of Names in the new Holocaust History Museum during the second day of inauguration ceremonies at the new museum complex in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem Wednesday. AP

Israel opens largest Holocaust museum

JERUSALEM—Israel on Tuesday formally opened the world's largest Holocaust museum built to commemorate the six million Jews exterminated by the Nazis, in the presence of scores of foreign leaders and dignitaries.

Hundreds of guests gathered for a full-scale evening ceremony of dedication complete with moving Yiddish lullabys and speeches at the sprawling Vad Vashem Holocaust memorial compound on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

"When you leave this museum, you see the sky of Jerusalem. I know how a Jew feels when he breathes the air of Jerusalem. He feels free, he feels at home," said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"He knows Israel is the only place in the world where Jews have the right to defend themselves, and that proves the Jewish people will never know another Shoah," he added.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said the United Nations, like Israel, rose up from the ashes of the Holocaust and the systematic. murder of six million Jews was a "driving force" behind the universal declaration of human rights.

"Today we remember those who perished... to ensure that their fate is recorded and never forgotten. It is also to ensure that such horror never happens again anywhere," he said.

Described as the biggest international event in Israel since the 1995 funeral of assassinated prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, nine heads of state, six prime ministers and four foreign ministers were among the audience.

The Yad Vashem memorial, dedicated to the millions of European Jews murdered by the Nazi regime during World War II, has spent the last 10 years creating the museum to keep alive the tragedy of the past.

"This is a holy place and the biggest hope for the future," Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres said.

Among those attending were the presidents of Poland and Switzerland, the premiers of Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Romania and Sweden, and the German, Norwegian and Spanish foreign ministers.

British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, Russian security council chief Igor Ivanov, Vatican representative Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel are also in Jerusalem for the event.

At a dinner for the guests at the Israeli parliament, President Moshe Katsav said the world was facing the worst anti-Semitism in 60 years, but offered praise to European leaders who stand up to the menace.

"Today we are facing a wave of anti-Semitism such that we have not seen since World War II," Katsav said.

"We had thought that anti-Semitism would never raise its head again. We had thought it was a phenomenon of an old world and an old Europe," he said.

"Once against we are witness to attacks on synagogues, desecrations in cemeteries and slander written on walls."

But he also offered his congratulations to European leaders.

"I congratulate the European leaders who react against anti-Semitism... and denounce attacks against Israel... Europe is now another Europe, he added.

The gathering, set to continue with a roundtable discussion on Wednesday, comes two months after international leaders gathered in Poland to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp.

Auschwitz survivor and writer Lucie Cytryn Bialer, 82, said she was deeply moved. The museum "will allow young people to understand that we were not just identity numbers as the Nazis wanted, but human beings," she said. *AFP*

Palestinians ready for Jericho transfer

JERICHO, West Bank—Palestinians prepared Tuesday to take control of Jericho from Israel in the first of five West Bank security transfers, as Palestinian factions met in Cairo to discuss a formal ceasefire.

After weeks of stalemate, Israel agreed Monday to hand over security responsibility for the town to the Palestinian Authority.

"We are totally ready to take control in the governorate of Jericho. We are ready to assume our responsibilities fully at both a security and civilian level," said Jericho Gov. Sami Musallam said Tuesday.

Israeli troops are to pull back from the quiet desert town and two checkpoints in its surrounding area on Wednesday in the first step in a four-week process, chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said.

Gen. Tal Russo, Israeli commander in the Jordan Valley, began talks with Palestinian security officials Tuesday night on finalizing the details.

A Palestinian official later said those talks would wrap up on Wednesday morning.

Handing over security in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Tulkarem and Jericho was a key issue agreed at a landmark peace summit in Egypt early last month.

But Israel's defense ministry stressed that the Jewish state would not tolerate any release of those militants jailed in Jericho for killing far-right Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi in October 2001.

The seeming breakthrough on Jericho came as the 13 major Palestinian factions gathered for talks in Cairo to decide whether to halt all operations against Israel.

Radical faction Hamas rejected a long-term ceasefire before the meeting even got underway, while its smaller rival Islamic Jihad insisted on Israeli concessions, paving the way for stormy talks.

"Hamas says it is not possible to agree or announce a truce during this dialogue. A cooling down period of several months is possible but not a long-term truce," said spokesperson Mohammed Nazal. *AFP*

SARA LEE DIRECT SELLING - PHILIPPINES
WILL CONTINUE TO BE STRONG DESPITE GLOBAL REVAMP

Global conglomerate giant Sara Lee Corp. announced its bold transformation plans last February 10, 2005. Among the major changes in its agenda are its plan to shift its focus on the retail aspects of its Food, Beverages and Household Products divisions, and to subsequently divest its Direct Selling Worldwide Group.

According to reports, the divestment plan is not an indication of the Sara Lee Direct Selling Worldwide Group's sales and profit performance. In fact, the division delivered record sales and profits in Fiscal Year 2004 – of which Sara Lee Direct Selling - Philippines (SLDS-P), one of the country's premiere direct selling companies, is a major contributor.

SLDS-P General Manager Ricky Sy clarified that "The global division is merely in the process of finding a new investor that will continue to manage and steer it in the ever-changing global business arena.""

Asked to elaborate on the future of SLDS-P, Sy reiterated, "Our company will continue to use the Sara Lee name and sell the Sara Lee brands including Playtex, Hanes, Wonderbra, Champion, Zwitsal, Nutrimetics and several others on a long-term basis."

"We will also continue to provide a superior earnings plan, highly-competitive recognition and incentive programs, including vehicle programs, for our hardworking salesforce," he added. "In addition, we will continue our aggressive growth plans, which include the opening of new outlets that will provide better earning opportunities for our dealers."

Even with this latest global development, Sara Lee Direct Selling - Philippines' management remain unfazed and continue to be optimistic about the company's long-term growth plans.

US eyes other options if Nokor talks fail

WASHINGTON—Stalled six-country negotiations on North Korea's nuclear weapons program must be accelerated or other ways for dealing with it must be considered, the US pointman on the issue said on Tuesday.

While the China-hosted talks are the preferred format for resolving the nuclear issue, "we need to see some progress here. If we don't, we need to look at other ways to deal with this," said Christopher Hill, US ambassador to South Korea.

Speaking at his US Senate nomination hearing to be assistant secretary of state for Asian and Pacific affairs, Hill talked about urging Russia and "any country doing any business" with North Korea to reconsider activities that encourage Pyongyang's "bad behavior."

If confirmed by the Senate, "I would like to look very carefully to see what more Russia could do," Hill told the Senate foreign relations committee.

"I think with respect to Russia—with respect to any country doing any business with North Korea—... we need to look very carefully at what they are doing... with a view to determining, are they somehow encouraging bad behavior from the North Koreans or are they encouraging North Korea to come back to the table," he said.

Hill spoke as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in Asia where jumpstarting the six-country negotiations—involving North and South Koreas, Japan, Russia and China, as well as the United States—is a major focus.

North Korea, meanwhile, said on Tuesday it may increase its nuclear arsenal to maintain a balance of power in East Asia.

On Feb. 10, Pyongyang declared for the first time it had nuclear weapons. US officials have long believed the reclusive communist state had enough nuclear material for one or two bombs. In recent years, that number was revised to eight or more.

Three rounds of six-way talks since August 2003 have been inconclusive. A fourth round planned for late 2004 never materialized.

Although Hill's comments seemed to add increasing urgency to the debate, a state department official said:

"Nobody (in the administration) as far as I know has come to the conclusion that this negotiating process has run the string."

President George W. Bush and other top officials repeatedly have stressed their commitment to a diplomatic solution.

At the hearing, Hill chided China for failing to get Pyongyang to resume negotiations. "It's our view that China as the host of this process should make sure they get everybody to the table," he said.

US officials have been unhappy that Beijing has been unwilling to use its leverage to force Pyongyang to the table.

Ambassador-designate Joseph DeTrani, US special envoy to the six-country talks, told the hearing the North gets 60 percent of its energy and 60 percent of its food from China.

But Beijing has refused US requests to use this leverage, arguing it is "humanitarian assistance," DeTrani said.

Hill did not go into detail about Russian business involvement with North Korea. DeTrani said European states like Italy and Switzerland have explored business opportunities there but they have not panned out because of the North's lack of infrastructure.

Bush has not ruled out military options in dealing with Pyongyang's nuclear program but 'that is a highly risky strategy and there is no indication it is being seriously contemplated.

The Senate foreign relations committee later approved the nominations of Hill, DeTrani and US ambassador to Japan designate J. Thomas Schieffer. The full Senate must now vote.

Reuters

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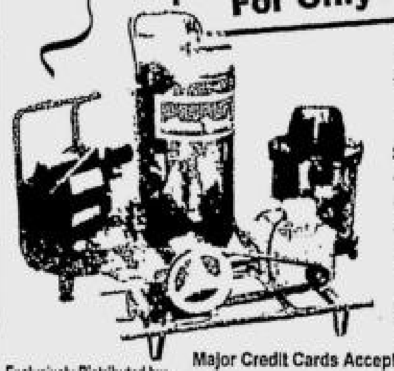
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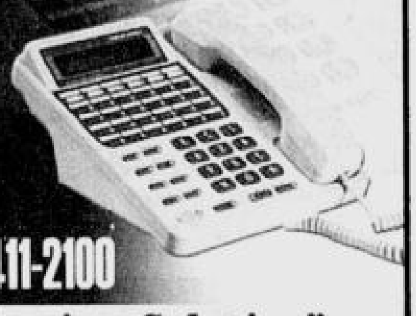
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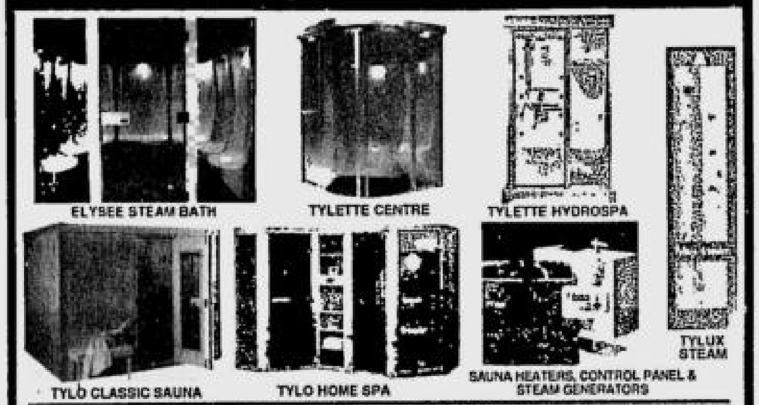

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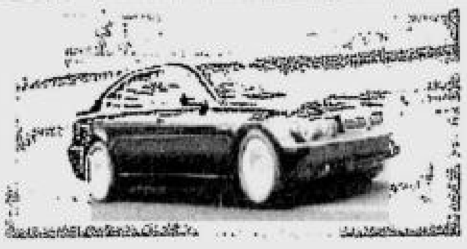
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Philippine Branch
SYNOPSIS OF ANNUAL STATEMENTS
A. Philippine Business
As of December 31, 2003 AND 2002

ADMITTED ASSETS

		2003	2002
Bonds	Ps.	98,117,040.00	135,000,000.00
Treasury Bills		30,000,000.00	20,000,000.00
Stocks		2,533,591.87	2,348,604.47
Other Loans		2,355,252.59	2,192,182.02
Security Fund		66,013.00	66,013.00
Other Investments		21,320,000.00	21,320,000.00
Cash on Hand and in Banks		169,803,863.36	153,478,750.17
Premiums Receivable		96,548,054.00	70,987,145.08
Premiums Due from Ceding Companies		9,172,691.00	3,559,604.00
Premiums Reserve Withheld by Ceding Companies		419,648.00	2,569,897.00
Reinsurance Recoverable on Losses		15,082,359.06	32,757,665.00
Accrued Investment Income		3,319,939.58	3,501,695.71
Other Receivables		2,412,000.00	0.00
EDP Equipment		718,039.00	1,755,710.00
Other Admitted Assets		0.00	4,221,401.48
Total Admitted Assets	Ps.	451,868,491.36	453,758,667.93

LIABILITIES

		2003	2002
Losses and Claims Payable	Ps.	48,642,662.00	73,597,235.70
Reserve for Unearned Premiums		62,705,974.20	78,413,980.20
Catastrophe Loss Reserve		7,423,165.82	12,181,864.30
Premiums Due to Reinsurers		215,143,794.00	183,290,453.86
Premium Reserve Witheld for Reinsurers		7,499,438.00	8,249,024.00
Commissions Payable		7,507,521.00	5,874,081.00
Accrued Expenses		2,744,710.00	21,765,911.00
Taxes Payable		9,444,876.02	6,146,446.34
Accounts Payable		327,104.00	0.00
Unearned Bond Discount		530,094.00	197,869.43
Other Liabilities		2,511,516.00	13,678,325.52
Total Liabilities	Ps.	364,480,855.04	403,395,191.35

TRUSTEED SURPLUS

		2003	2002
Statutory Deposit		50,000,000.00	50,000,000.00
Home Office Inward Remittances		91,691,295.00	91,691,295.00
Home Office Account		(54,303,428.68)	(91,327,818.42
Total Trusteed Surplus	Ps.	87,387,866.32	50,363,476.58
Total Liabilities and Trusteed Surplus	Ps.	451,868,721.36	453,758,667.93

B. Worldwide Business
As of December 31, 2002 and 2003

Total Assets	£	14,376,000,000.00	11,330,000,000.00
Total Liabilities		3,211,000,000.00	1,662,000,000.00
Trusteed Surplus		11,165,000,000.00	9,668,000,000.00
Total Liabilities and Trusteed Surplus	£	14,376,000,000.00	11,330,000,000.00

*(Capital Impairment and Margin of Solvency Deficiency subsequently covered up in full)

*(This synopsis, prepared from the 2003 & 2002 Annual Statements, approved by the Insurance Commissioner, is published pursuant to Section 225 of the Insurance Code of 1978, as amended.)

Taiwan's Chen calls for massive protests vs China

CHEN

TAIPEI—Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian condemned as a "law of aggression" Wednesday antisecession legislation that China enacted this week, and repeated a call for one million people to march in protest.

"Chinese communists have enacted a law of aggression which unilaterally altered the cross-strait status quo, heightening regional tensions and triggering disturbances in the world community," Chen said.

In his first comments on the law since it was passed Monday, Chen also repeated his call for a mass rally to protest the legislation.

"Taiwanese people must be united to have their voice heard," Chen said while meeting a group called the Global Alliance for Democracy and Peace that is made up of Taiwanese living abroad.

"One million people will march on March 26 to show their rejection to the law of aggression in a most peaceful, rational and humble way," he said.

The leader, who favors democratic Taiwan's formal independence from China, stressed Taiwan's independent sovereignty, saying, "Only the 23 million people on the island have the right to decide on the country's future."

The antisecession law passed by China's National People's Congress Monday grants the Chinese military a legal base to use "non peaceful means" against Taiwan if the island makes moves to declare independence.

"Any legislation permitting the use of force to invade the basic rights of other people, whatever reasons or excuses are, is violating the universal beliefs in freedom, democracy and human rights," Chen said.

"Only through dialogues can the two sides resolve their differences, and 'non-peaceful' means would only widen the rift between the two sides," he said.

Chen also again urged the European Union not to lift an arms embargo slapped on China after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in which thousands of pro-democracy students died in a military crackdown.

"The European Union has no reason to remove the embargo imposed on a potential aggressor unless it abandons 'non-peaceful means' and guarantees peace," he said.

"We are glad to see a stably expanding China, but it should also demonstrate its 'peaceful awakening' to the world society...."

Taiwan and China have been governed separately since their split in 1949 after a civil war but Beijing still sees the island as part of its territory that must eventually be reunified, by force if necessary.

Tensions across the Taiwan Strait that separates the island from the mainland have been escalating since Chen, from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, was first elected president in 2000. He won reelection in 2004.

Chen has pledged not to declare independence during his tenure, saying he would seek ways to improve ties with the long-time rival.

However he has rejected Beijing's proposal for reunification using the "one country, two systems" model adopted by Hong Kong and Macau after the two former colonies reverted to China in 1997 and 1999, respectively. *AFP*

Pentagon finds 'no evidence' of anthrax at mail centers

FEDERAL HAZMAT response team agents and local fire officials enter the lobby of a locked-down building containing a Department of Defense mail facility in Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia, March 15. REUTERS

WASHINGTON—Tests on filters and equipment at two shut-down postal centers that serve the Pentagon have turned up no evidence of deadly anthrax, the US defense department's top health official said on Tuesday.

Assistant Defense Secretary for Health Affairs William Winkenwerder said these tests provided "reassuring news," but stopped short of declaring the situation a false alarm pending the completion of additional tests.

"We have no evidence that there was anthrax material in the mail," Winkenwerder told reporters.

Winkenwerder noted that an initial test came back as positive for the anthrax bacterium at a mail-processing facility located on the grounds of the Pentagon, the colossal headquarters for the US military.

"Our subsequent test results in and around the area where that positive initial test result was obtained, as well as many other areas, have all come back negative," Winkenwerder said.

"Based on all this, we would say at this time that the probability is low to very low that we're dealing with a true health threat. However, we want to continue to perform testing and that will be going on throughout the night and tomorrow (Wednesday)," he added.

He said he hoped the Pentagon could make "an absolutely definitive statement" on Wednesday.

Two defense department mail-handling facilities in Virginia—the one next to the Pentagon and another several kilometers away—were closed and hundreds of workers evacuated on Monday after sensitive detection devices indicated the presence of anthrax, Pentagon officials said. But the mail had already been irradiated to kill any bacteria, the officials said.

Anthrax is an acute, sometimes deadly infectious disease caused by a spore-forming bacterium that can be used as a biological weapon.

In 2001, five people died when anthrax was sent in letters to media and government offices in Washington, Florida and elsewhere, raising fears of bioterrorism. Those cases have not been solved.

Winkenwerder said the two Virginia facilities remained closed, but said it was possible they could be re-opened as earlier as Wednesday morning.

Also on Tuesday, a postal center in Washington was closed and about 200 employees offered antibiotics as a precaution in case the facility had handled the Pentagon mail, officials said.

Winkenwerder said experts initially registered a positive indication for anthrax using a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test on a sample taken from the Defense Department's remote mail distribution facility, located just outside the Pentagon building.

The facility is intended to screen everything coming into the Pentagon, from letters to packages and construction materials.

He said subsequent tests on filters at both facilities as well as mail-processing equipment came back negative.

Earlier, Bill Hall, a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Human Services, said federal health officials would send a bulletin to doctors, hospitals and clinics asking them to watch for patients suffering from symptoms of exposure to anthrax.

"It doesn't mean we're expecting anything out there, but it's just out of the abundance of caution," Hall said.

The Washington postal center that was closed on Tuesday was being screened for anthrax traces, said Dr. Gregg Pane, director of the District of Columbia's health department. He said there was "no confirmed detection" nor had employees reported any illness.

Glenn Flood, a Pentagon spokesman, said the mail room samples that first led sensors to detect anthrax at the two Pentagon postal facilities were collected last Thursday, with the results confirmed on Monday. *Reuters*

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US concerned at China military buildup—Rice

RICE

NEW DELHI—US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Tuesday the United States was concerned about China's military buildup because of Beijing's rising tensions with Taiwan, an island Washington has vowed to defend.

"Certainly, the military spending is concerning because it is taking place at a time when the cross-Strait issue (with Taiwan) is not still resolved and in which the United States has certain commitments to a peaceful solution," Rice said at the start of a six-nation trip to Asia that includes China.

China, whose booming economy has fueled a military buildup for several years, considers Taiwan a renegade province that it wants to bring back into the fold.

The United States has warned China that an antisecession law it passed on Monday authorizing the use of force against Taiwan if it declares statehood runs counter to recent progress in Beijing's relations with the democratic island.

Passage of the antisecession bill by China's parliament also drew warnings from the self-ruled island that Beijing would have to pay a price if it attacked.

The top US diplomat, on her first trip to the region as secretary of state, said the United States wanted to act as an "upright anchor" providing stability by criticizing both sides if they made moves that could stoke tensions.

She warned China, which is particularly sensitive to what it considers US interference over Taiwan, that the United States would not idly watch the world's most populous nation increase its military power.

Rice said US alliances in Asia, such as with Japan and South Korea, could keep a military balance, although she stressed Washington was no threat to China and wanted the emerging powerhouse to play a "constructive role" in the region.

"There are several ways to deal with (the buildup). Perhaps the most important is to recognize the United States has very strong alliances in the region that bring stability to the region at a time when the Chinese role is changing," Rice told reporters aboard the plane taking her to Asia.

"Now we don't have any desire to have the alliances or our posture be a posture against China," she said.

Rice said she hoped the worries over Taiwan would give the European Union pause for thought as it plans to lift an arms embargo against China, a move the United States opposes.

The embargo was imposed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators.

Rice said she would raise China's human rights record, and particularly religious freedoms, during her visit to Beijing on Sunday.

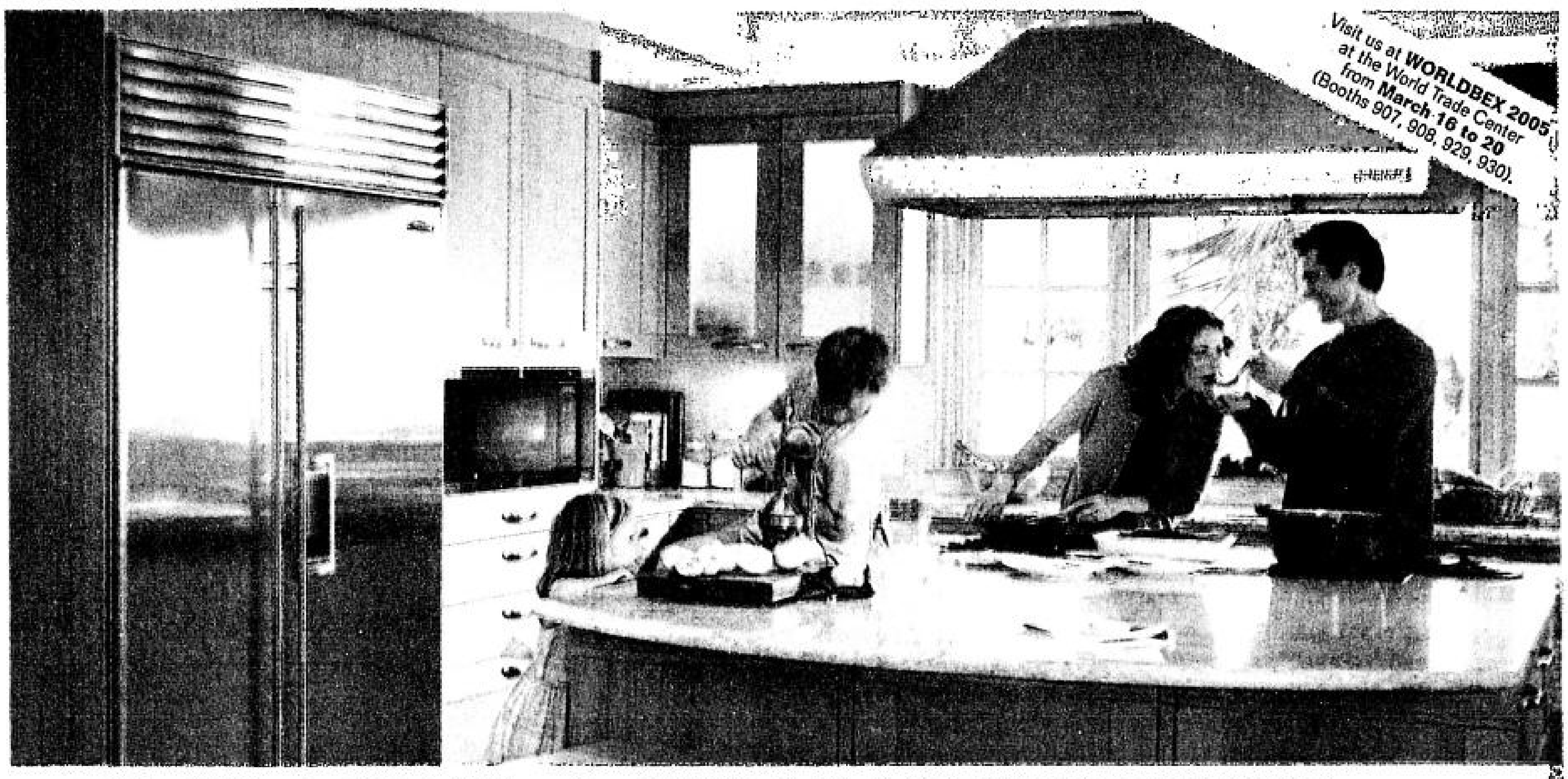
"China can emerge as a constructive force in Asia," she said. "Our goal is to enhance the chances for a constructive role for China through engagement with China on security issues like the six-party arrangement," where Beijing has hosted talks with North Korea over dismantling its nuclear program.

The Bush administration, which has focused its diplomacy this year on Europe and the Middle East, has come under some pressure to defuse China's tensions with Taiwan.

"Underneath the surface there is mounting (Chinese) militarism on the issue of Taiwan," Kurt Campbell of the Washington-based think-tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies said.

"Current moves from Beijing are a reminder that the United States cannot relegate Asia to a second-class state in terms of its larger global interests."

Reuters



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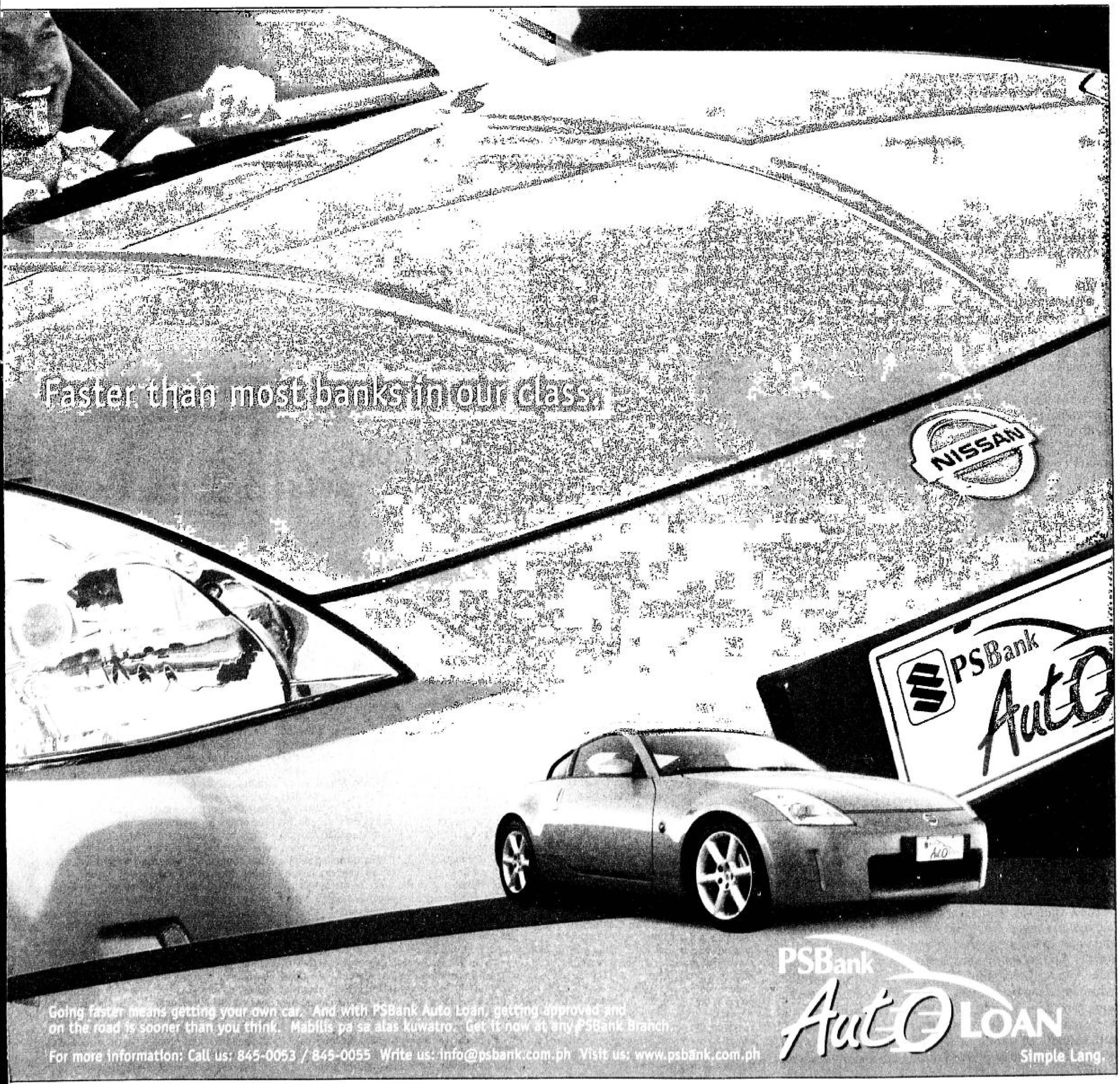

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ISSN 0116-2642
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Vol. 20 No. 99
Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net
OPINION
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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•100% soy ink•

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Cleaning up

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo, as expected, has ordered a thorough investigation of the failed jailbreak attempt that turned into an uprising and left 28 people dead. Her spokesman, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, said Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes has been directed to lead the probe with the end in view of pinpointing responsibility and making sure the incident is not repeated.

Of course, that was exactly the same order given by Malacañang after Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, of the al-Qaida affiliated international terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah, escaped from the maximum security detention center in Camp Crame in July 2003. It was the same order issued a year earlier when Pentagon kidnap gang leader Faizal Marohombsar escaped also from Camp Crame. But if any official of some consequence was held accountable for them and punished accordingly, only a few people must have heard about it. And if any reforms were put in place to make our prisons and detention centers more secure, they must be a well-kept secret. What is more certain is that such incidents have been recurring, at progressively greater cost to the government in terms of international embarrassment, heightened threats to national security and even human lives.

The violence this week at Camp Bagong Diwa was particularly a vicious blow to the Arroyo administration and to our law-enforcement agencies. It allowed the whole world to see how lax and how inefficient our jail officials can be in handling even the most dangerous criminals. For this oversight, three jail guards and a policeman had to pay with their lives. And even as the whole nation heaved a sigh of relief that the crisis has been overcome, doubts persist as to whether all the force applied by authorities and all the shooting and killing were absolutely necessary to bring the uprising to an end. The end result of all that violence has not been a lowering of tension but its heightening as the Abu Sayyaf has vowed to avenge the deaths of some of their leaders by bombing urban areas.

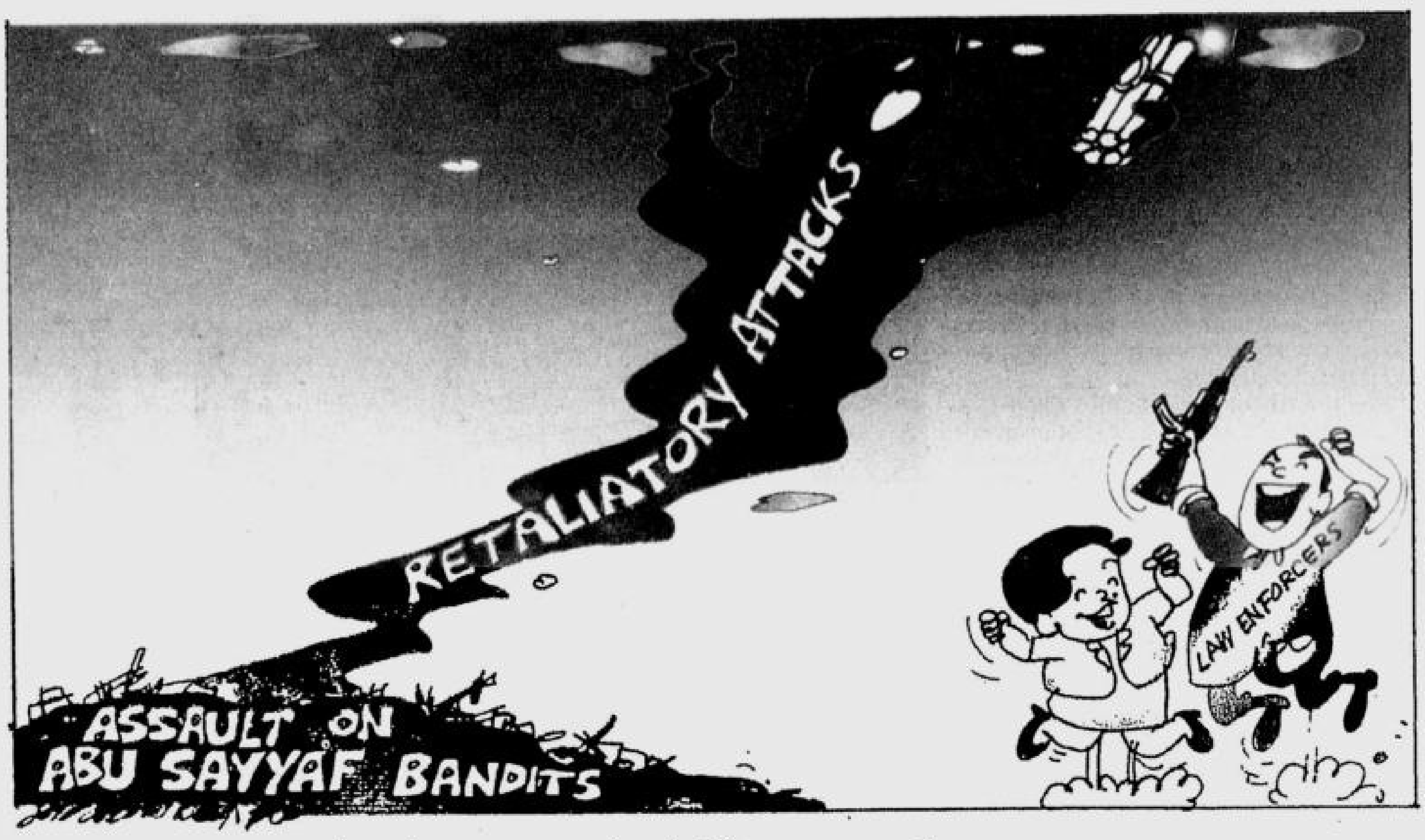
There's a big mess left out there by the prison uprising, but we have doubts if Reyes is the right man to lead the cleanup. In the first place, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology is an attached agency to the Department of the Interior and Local Government. How impartial can Reyes be in his investigation? And how high will he go in assigning responsibility for everything that happened?

The BJMP director, Chief Supt. Arturo Alit, has started the washing of hands by pointing out that his bureau is woefully short of personnel, equipment and other resources. He even seems to think his bureau deserves congratulations that despite the "thin deployment of personnel, no inmate managed to escape."

But Alit glosses over the major—and ultimately fatal—lapses in security that allowed the Abu Sayyaf inmates to initiate their escape plan. Guns had been smuggled into prison. The most notorious terrorists were not being held in isolation but in the company of more than 100 other inmates. The few prison guards assigned to conduct a head count of inmates were allowed to bring their firearms. All of which had nothing to do with lack of resources, and everything to do with lack of common sense or training on security procedures.

Reyes should begin work on his new assignment from the President by relieving Alit of his post. After that, he can proceed to find out where the prison system and processes are weak. Then he can recommend measures to prevent similar escape attempts in the future.

It would certainly be useful to know all these, but it would be at least just as important to find out why so much blood had to be shed and so many lives had to be wasted when vastly superior government forces were pitted against caged foes. And obviously Reyes, who gave the order to begin the assault, would be the wrong man for the job, unless the administration wants to mount a farce of an investigation. But does the administration, which has been lavish in its praise of the police forces that took part in the assault, want to know if unnecessary and excessive force was employed to neutralize a handful of armed men? Or does it believe that, armed or unarmed, each of the 22 inmates killed during the assault deserved to die?



Two ladies and different drummers

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

TWO handsome, brainy, articulate women named Mary Ann have grabbed headlines and prime time in Cebu's often truculent media. In their mid-30s, both have college degrees, are business-like and are increasingly visible in this crammed metropolis' radar.

But the similarities end there.

One of the ladies is the brash prosecutor of neighboring Talisay City. Mary Ann Castro wants to fill the Cebu City Prosecutor's Office boots. She also applied to become a judge. "I'll bring beauty and brains to the bench," she says without skipping a beat.

"Chief fiscal," snorted a skeptical Mayor Tomas Osmeña. "Ha,ha,ha,ha,ha. Big joke."

All Castro brought, so far, is yet another firestorm. An unexpected coalition of judges, lawyers and fellow prosecutors raked up her less-than-brillant record. It is one capped by cases before the Ombudsman. Her high-profile dates, after a failed marriage, were tracked by media. That hasn't helped her.

The other lady is a low-profile barangay captain. For her solid record of service, citizens in 39 sitios of Lahug gave Mary Ann de los Santos and ticket a landslide mandate. That thrashed Mayor Osmeña's all-out drive to beat her. "Meet Mary Ann—the giant killer from Lahug," Sun-Star captioned the story.

De los Santos' no-nonsense settling of disputes, through voluntary barangay mediation processes, saw 936 out of 938 cases settled in a year. Only two went to congested courts.

This is 99.7 percent efficiency. A tough review by independent experts led by a former Supreme Court justice validated this new national achievement record.

An earlier Ateneo School of Government study found that in one year, 236,452 cases were settled out of a total of 279,115 barangay disputes recorded nationally.

"This is an 84 percent solution factor," wrote the Philippine Judicial Academy's Bernardo Ponferrada in a study of the "Barangay Justice System and Other Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanics." It's a telling indicator of "substantial number of potential cases that never reached the court because of the effective intervention of a settlement mechanism."

That record bagged for Lahug the coveted Bureau of Local Governments Supervision Award. De los Santos will get a P125,000 check from President Macapagal-Arroyo for the Lahug projects.

"Credit citizens who mediate as well as our systems," she says. "If our experience can improve mediation, as practiced in over 41,943 barangays nationwide, that would be a bonus."

The two ladies serve the same constituency within the same metropolis. Yet, reaction to them starkly differ.

"She Isn't Fit," read the Cebu Daily News' banner on its report of a manifesto, sent to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, bucking "even mere endorsement" of Castro.

Backed by the highly regarded Judges Gabriel Ingles and Meinrado Paredes, the prosecutors bluntly said the City Prosecutor's Office "does not need someone with a tarnished reputation and a baggage of graft cases as its chief."

The Cebu Lady Lawyers Association Inc. (Celia) and Child's Legal Bureau concurred, saying that other prosecutors were more qualified. But the Legal Alternative for Women Inc. was more explicit. Castro was nailed by the Ombudsman in four cases, Law Inc. executive director Dolores Aliño stressed. These included monies in a drug case, a fling with a married man, meddling in other people's businesses and interference in a filed case where "she was not the resident prosecutor."

The critics are "only jealous of (my) accomplishments," she scoffed. *Inggit lang sila*? But Pinoy chutzpah has always been Castro's signature.

De los Santos, in contrast, shuns bombast. In fact, she has a reputation for understatement. "Osmeña magic does not work in Lahug," she shrugged to puzzled broadcasters after she trashed, yet again, City Hall in the 2004 elections.

That's matched with sustained citizen consultations and innovative services, from postal services in barangays to deep wells and garbage collection. Nor does she wheedle City Hall for personal perks, be it handguns or bonuses. (In 12 Cebu barangays, the Commission on Audit reports, officials helped themselves to trust funds for Christmas bonuses.)

The BLG awards is only the latest of the feathers in De los Santos' cap. It may also have nationwide implications for the informal system of dispute settlement nailed into place by PD 1508 in 1978. Republic Act 7160 updated the system.

"A distinct characteristic of the system is its informality," notes the Philippine Judicial Academy study. "Lawyers are banned in the entirety of the process." Was it Dick who said in Shakespeare's Henry VI, "The first thing we do is kill all lawyers"?

Despite its success, "there are recurring doubts" since the system started 27 years back, Ponferrada writes. "Our courts are still congested" although the lack of judges is a crippling bottleneck, an INQUIRER editorial observes.

In urbanized areas, author John Willem notes, judges and citizens hardly know who their barangay captain is. "This decreasing credibility...may explain why the backlog of cases is more serious in urban areas."

Maybe so. But the system worked in Lahug, within a major metropolis. De los Santos' experience could provide future guideposts.

Funny, but the paths of these two ladies apparently never crossed. Is it because they march to the beat of different drummers? In any case, Mary Ann, may I introduce to you Mary Ann?

* * *

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Stupid

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

COMPLETELY fortuitously, I had just seen the movie, "Assault on Precinct 13," a few days before the assault on Camp Bagong Diwa. The movie, a remake of the John Carpenter original which was a hit three decades ago, tells the story of a cop killer being transported to a maximum-security prison who is deposited instead in a local police precinct when his escorts encounter heavy snow. The precinct soon finds itself under siege.

Common sense says it is the cop killer's friends come to rescue him. Common sense is soon replaced by uncommon truth, which is that the murderous crew outside the precinct is not the cop killer's gang but his presumed nemeses, who are the cops themselves. As it turns out, they were once partners in crime, before the cops became greedy and demanded a bigger cut. The cop killer became so out of self-defense, and now his ex-partners want to make sure he doesn't get to court.

Short of a thorough, or at least independent, investigation of the Assault on Camp Bagong Diwa, that is going to be one lingering suspicion in the mind of the public. The authorities went full force to obliterate the inmates to make sure no one lives to tell the tale. A tale of sordid collusion, if not partnership, between jailers and jailees for mutual gain. That tale had been told before, Abu Sayyaf detainees, described as notorious terrorists, routinely escaping from what are also described, not without provoking much laughter from the public, as maximum-security institutions.

The last is no exception. That the most wanted criminals in the country could take over a prison presumed to be the local equivalent of Guantanamo must pose uncommon questions to common sense. Particularly so as the plan of the inmates to do so had apparently been known to the police as far back as last December. Which is not surprising: there is no secret in this country. Coups are also known well in advance, a fact that seems to have no deterrent effect on them. Largely because those who get wind of them either do not mind them or are part of them.

Either that was the case or Angelo Reyes decided on the action-movie solution to sandpaper the new embarrassment to his boss in Malacañang. For some reason, in this country the spectacle of dead suspects is believed to show resolve and efficiency on the part of law enforcers. Look how Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo preens before the cameras with the bullet-riddled body of a presumed drug-pusher slumped on the wheel of car or lying in a pool of blood on the pavement as background to show she is pushing back crime in Metro Manila. When all she is pushing back is public taste and basic respect for human life. But in this country, too, you call someone a criminal or terrorist, and he (or she) ceases to take on human properties and becomes, well, a cardboard villain in a brainless movie.

"I commend the government team led by Secretary Angelo Reyes that exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the Bicutan crisis, weighed their options after an extended standoff, and finally decided to use force as a last resort," GMA said in the wake of the massacre. What exhausted all peaceful means? What weighed options? What last resort?

Did the prisoners' takeover pose any imminent threat to the life or limb of any official or inmate of the prison? No. Of course, it had resulted in the deaths of three guards and two inmates. If so, then the case should have been thoroughly investigated after the prisoners surrendered and the guilty punished by all the laws of Allah or Jehovah. Why should they all be condemned to death?

Were the prisoners armed to the teeth or capable of holding out indefinitely? No. They had five handguns and a couple of grenades, a fact that could be known by a cursory inventory of the arms kept in the prison. Cut off the water and send the inmates pork, and you could flush them out.

But here's what takes the cake. Were their demands unreasonable? Judge for yourself. Those demands were: 1. They would not be bodily harmed; 2. Their human rights would be respected; 3. They would be assured a speedy trial; 4. Their lawyer would be allowed to see them; 5. Their appointed spokesman, "Ka Lando," would be available for media interviews. What is particularly objectionable about any, or all, of the above?

As it turned out, Reyes agreed to those demands, but only as a ploy. He was going to attack anyway. And they say Moros may not be believed, they are natural-born *traydors*.

This massacre—that is what it is, pure and simple—does not strike a blow against terrorism, it strikes a blow for it. The Moros have been complaining for so long about the double standard, about how a massacre by soldiers of their own becomes an encounter and how their retaliation becomes an atrocity. None of it excuses, or condones, the Abu Sayyaf's St. Valentine's Day massacre—that was an act of terrorism, no more and no less than the massacre by government troops of their families—but it does call attention to the iniquity. Call someone a terrorist and you can pretty much do anything you want with him.

You are a soldier, or combatant, your first duty is to escape if you are taken prisoner. If several soldiers overpower their Moro captors, killing some of them, and escape, we would applaud it and turn it into a movie. If their captors manage to catch up with them and slaughter them, we would shout our heads off about savagery and barbarism. And say they have lived up to their billing as terrorists. Now how would the massacre of the Moro inmates of Camp Bagong Diwa (what a monumentally ironic name, "Bagong Diwa") look from the other side? As the handiwork of people you can sit down and reason with? As justice truly served?

It is nothing more or less than an act of absolute stupidity.

A Lenten story from PNB

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THIS sad story concerning the Philippine National Bank, the country's oldest bank, is truly fit for the Lenten Season. It involves about 25 hard-working Filipino citizens, including an overseas worker who invested his earnings from 18 long years of hard work abroad. But I understand that about 48 depositors have actually been defrauded of their deposits, and this was made possible with the collusion of high-ranking officials of PNB-Sucat in Parañaque over a two-year period.

Accordingly, the bank fired several bank officials for "willful breach of trust and gross misconduct and dishonesty" without prejudice to the filing of criminal cases against them. But the PNB has heartlessly ignored—and continues to ignore—the demands of the defrauded depositors for the return of their money, which run into millions of pesos. When they turned to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. for help, they were merely given the run-around, their pleas amounting to nothing.

* * *

Desperate for help, some of the 25 depositors are preparing to file a case against the PNB. But pitted against the bank's powerful lawyers, the poor citizens can't hope for anything unless the Senate or the House of Representatives comes to their rescue. The depositors have brought their case to Sen. Aquilino Pimentel who's best known for his populist heart. At the very least, their complaint deserves a hearing, as it's highly possible that this multimillion-peso scam is happening in other branches of the PNB and possibly other banks.

* * *

There is a clear pattern to the heartbreaking story of Ligaya Pasimio, a faithful depositor of PNB for over 20 years, and of the other defrauded clients. In December 1999, a former senior vice president of a big advertising company in Manila decided to invest her retirement pay of several millions at PNB Harrison Plaza in two Mint placements, then yielding an interest rate of about 14 percent per annum. Her daughter also entrusted her life savings in dollars to her and she deposited it as FXCTD at PNB Sucat branch.

By early 2001, the decreasing interest rates were too small to live on, so Ligaya inquired from PNB Sucat if they had a product with a higher yield. A PNB customer service officer, Gloria Miranda, said that indeed she could earn more. Upon Miranda's advice, Ligaya transferred her Mint account to Sucat. She was asked to sign a blank form which, she was made to understand, would signify the additional 3-percent earnings from her Mint placement. Immediately, Miranda withdrew money from the teller and handed it to Ligaya, who was surprised to receive an "advance monthly interest" (3 percent of the principal amount). All along she thought the percentage referred to an annual, not a monthly interest rate. Ligaya expressed apprehension over it, but Miranda assured her everything was aboveboard, it was a privilege given only to select clients. Ligaya was then told she may discontinue her investment by giving the bank a one-month lead time.

* * *

On her next visit to Sucat, she was persuaded by Miranda and the branch manager, Teresita Fe Gregorio, to also put her second Mint placement, as well as her daughter's dollar account, in this high-yield investment, assuring her of its safety. The interesting thing was that the "advance monthly interests" were taken from the teller by either the manager or the CSO; at times Ligaya herself would get it from the teller upon their instruction. She received these monthly earnings from March 2001 to September 2002, when she gave notice that she was terminating her first investment because her husband needed the money to pay for huge medical bills.

Instead of returning her money, however, the PNB rolled it over. Worse, it stopped paying the 3-percent interest for all three accounts. All she got were the regular 4.5-percent annual interest earnings from her Mint placements. From then on, she was given one excuse after another. By this time her husband, business executive Renato Pasimio Jr., was fighting for his life and was in and out of hospitals, but Ligaya couldn't withdraw from her accounts, forcing her to turn to friends and relatives for help. Early last year, Renato succumbed to cancer. With tears in her eyes, Ligaya mused, "Perhaps, if I had more funds available, we could have prolonged his life or at least made him more comfortable."

* * *

About this time, the Sucat branch manager, the CSO and some staff members were transferred to other branches, one after another. Investigating what happened with her money, the new PNB Sucat loan officer explained that her high-yield investments were actually a "back-to-back loan." Meaning, it appeared on paper that she loaned her own Mint deposits. But Ligaya claims that the bank officials instead lent her money to a former bank client who could no longer pay the loan.

Shocked, Ligaya sought a copy of bank documents of her supposed loan against her own Mint placements—either a manager's check or a credit memo depositing such proceeds in her savings account, or a withdrawal slip of said proceeds from her savings account. But she says the account shows no such deposit, much less a withdrawal in millions of pesos. She then met with one of the PNB first vice presidents and the legal officer from the Administrative Investigation and Prosecution Division at the head office. The latter assured her he would provide her copies of the "loan" documents, but Ligaya claims that, despite repeated follow-ups, she has received none. She next sought the help of BSP assistant governor and general counsel Juan de Zuñiga, who referred her complaint to Ma. Corazon Guerrero, director of the BSP Supervision and Examination Department. *(To be continued)*

'Bulanghoy,' 'balinghoy'

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

Inday, bayle ta/ Di ko kay kapuy/ Amon pamahaw bulanghoy/ Amon panihudto bulanghoy nga puto/ Amon panihapon bulanghoy gihapon. (Inday, let us dance/ No, I am tired/ Our breakfast was cassava/ Our lunch was cassava cake/ Our supper was still cassava.)

I LEARNED that folk song many years ago from my Cebuano-speaking friends from whom I also learned street-corner lingo, like "*Wa ka kuyapi?*" and how to eat boiled unripe bananas with *ginamos* (fish paste) which, for me, is a gustatory puzzlement. We kept singing the *bulanghoy* (cassava) song until the guitar strings broke. It was sung best when we were a little soused and it brought us down to earth and away from all the academic stuff.

That song was swimming in my head the past week, after 27 schoolchildren in Mabini, Bohol, died and more than a hundred were downed shortly after they ate fried cassava snacks sold by vendors. Questions were immediately raised. Was it the cassava root that did it? Was it the way the food was prepared? Cassava contains linamarin. If cassava is improperly prepared, this toxic component could remain. When ingested, linamarin converts to cyanide in the human digestive system.

Or was there something else that got into the food? Like poison, pesticides or harmful bacteria? If something had to take the blame, I was hoping it would be one of these. I did not want the starchy root to be mired in stigma.

Well, two days ago, the health department ruled that it was pesticide, present in the cassava snack, that did it. But investigations will continue.

The day this tragedy happened, I was eating cassava *pitsi-pitsi* which I had bought from a popular food place in Chinatown. It was in a microwaveable plastic container with a stick-on label that said it tastes best if refrigerated. *Bulanghoy, balinghoy* or *kamoteng kahoy* has come a long way from its barrio *nilupak* beginnings. Making *nilupak* (by pounding together boiled cassava, young coconut and sugar) is still an excuse for farm folk to soak in the glow of the full moon.

If you laid out before me a variety of desserts that consisted of pastries with vanilla essence and fancy toppings on one side and native goodies (*kakanin*) on the other side, I'd make a beeline for the latter. The blend of coconut meat and milk with sticky rice or grated starchy roots, caramelized sugar and *pandan*, sometimes with a sprinkling of sesame seeds and nuts, was concocted in heaven where the majority must be Southeast Asians. The late Doreen Gamboa-Fernandez, food writer, author, teacher, would agree.

I've read that cassava is the world's third most important crop. Cassava (*manihot esculenta*) originated in Brazil where it is called manioc. The Portuguese colonizers later brought it to Africa.

Cassava is the principal source of nutrition for about 500 million people. The root is a rich source of carbohydrates, protein, minerals and vitamins A, B and C.

The North Americans have it as tapioca (sago to us) for their custard-like tapioca pudding. The Chinese use it for *tikoy*. From cassava also comes *gawgaw* (all-purpose starch powder). Filipinos make a variety of cassava delights, among them, cassava *bibingka*.

Cassava leaves are edible. I have not tried a leafy dish, but I found a recipe which has a French name, *Feuilles de Manioc*, on the Internet. This is a Central African recipe which resembles our own *laing* magnifique which uses *gabi* (taro) leaves.

An article in a World Bank site says that "new knowledge of the biochemistry of the crop has proved that the proteins embedded in the leaves are equal in quality to the protein in egg. Cassava leaves and roots, if properly processed, can therefore provide a balanced diet protecting millions of African children against malnutrition."

Cassava is called "Africa's food security crop." Incidentally, improperly prepared cassava was the cause of a disease called konzo which was first noticed in Africa in the 1930s. This turned out be low-level cyanide poisoning.

Cassava is a versatile crop and can grow even in poor soil and in between trees and other crops, suppressing weed growth. Its abundant leaves that fall to the ground are good organic matter that enriches the soil.

During the Nigerian civil war when food was scarce, Flora Nwapa, a Nigerian novelist and poet, wrote in praise of this African staple:

"We thank the almighty God/ For giving us cassava/We hail thee cassava/The great cassava

"You grow in poor soils/You grow in rich soils/You grow in gardens/You grow in farms

"You are easy to grow/Children can plant you/Women can plant you/Everybody can plant you

"We must sing for you/Great cassava, we must sing/We must not forget/Thee, the great one."

But I must end with a spoiler. A vendor of the cassava snack, who was herself stricken ill and groveling in her hospital bed, with tubes in her nostrils and all, had to be made to cough up answers by the ABS-CBN team led by Karen Davila. Did the poor woman have the choice to say no?

Wasn't this manner of gathering news discussed at the "Media Nation 2" assembly last month? The network's news gatekeepers and top guns, among them, Luchi Cruz-Valdez and Maria Ressa (who moved in from CNN), were present. Emergency-room journalism still thrives hereabouts.

I declare loudly that we must appreciate the media's presence in Mabini. That said, may I also say that if I allowed my words to match the intensity of my disgust on seeing that bedside behavior, I would say things differently.

And so I simply ask the ABS-CBN team, why? Not, why did you do that, which begs for a justification. Why, as in, why were you so insensitive?

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Defining terrorism

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE TERMS "terrorism" and "terrorist" have been used and abused to apply to all things—and persons—that governments all over the world don't like. This is nothing new. The Prussians, encountering resistance in France after defeating Napoleon III's army in Sedan in 1870, referred to guerrillas as "franc-tireurs," and vowed harsh reprisals against any captured "terrorist" and anyone supporting them.

Today, "terrorism" is defined as "the unlawful or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons." While a "terrorist" is defined variously as "a radical who employs terror as a political weapon; usually organizes with other terrorists in small cells; often uses religion as a cover for terrorist activities," or "one who utilizes the systematic use of violence and intimidation to achieve political objectives, while disguised as a civilian non-combatant. The use of a civilian disguise while on operations exempts the perpetrator from protection under the Geneva Conventions, and consequently if captured they are liable for prosecution as common criminals." But these are definitions put together by certain individuals and publishers of dictionaries: they are not the legally-binding; neither are they found on the statute books of nations. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called for governments the world over to determine a common definition of "terrorism" and "terrorist."

Annan's call is timely because of fears that governments, in fighting terrorism, are playing too fast and free with its definition and with the way they treat suspected terrorists. In our case, this is of particular relevance because the government has been waging decades-long campaigns against insurgents. It now seems to find calling insurgents terrorists useful—to gain foreign support and aid, and to escape the limitations of existing laws.

What is an insurgency? An insurgency is variously defined as an "organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict," or "subversive political activity, civil rebellion, revolt, or insurrection designed to weaken and overthrow a duly constituted authority by its own people."

These definitions use terms long understood and accepted by long-standing laws. Over the past 75 years, our legal system has made it clear what the terms "subversion," "rebellion," and "insurrection" mean. And it has delineated ways for the legal system to handle those charged with these crimes. This is as much for the protection of the individual as it is for the protection of the state. Our laws detail how individual rights must be protected in the face of such charges.

Now when the CPP-NPA, which has been waging (in its view) a revolution against a government that sees the communist campaign as rebellion, insurrection, sedition, etc., does injecting the word "terrorism" further confuse matters? It does. When the CPP-NPA blows up a Globe Telecoms cellular site, for example, is it engaging in terrorism, or economic sabotage? Or is such an act in keeping with a protracted guerrilla war? Is engaging an AFP squad on patrol an act of terrorism, or is it guerrilla operations? When the NPA issues manifestoes warning of dire consequences if government pursues a certain direction or fails to do something, is it engaging in terrorism because its words could sow fear and terror in the hearts of people? And when it demands revolutionary taxes, is it engaging in terrorism, or simple extortion?

"Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror" (originally published anonymously, but is now known to have been written by Michael Scheuer who, following the publication of his book, resigned from the CIA after a 22-year career that included heading the Osama bin Laden unit of the agency), has this helpful distinction between terrorism and insurgency: "An insurgency is fought in a different manner and on a larger scale than terrorism, and wars against a competently led insurgency—and bin Laden has proved himself far more than just competent—lasts longer, costs more money and lives, and are more steadily brutal than episodic confrontations with terrorists. In an extraordinarily insightful 2002 essay, Richard K. Betts pointed out, 'Apart from the victims of guerrillas, few still identify irregular paramilitary warfare with terrorism (because the latter is illegitimate), but the two activities do overlap a great deal in their operational characteristics... The tactical logic of guerrilla operations resembles that in terrorist attacks: the weaker rebels use stealth and the cover of civilian society to concentrate their striking power against one among many of the stronger enemy's dispersed assets.'"

An argument could be made that blowing up a telecoms site is terrorism, attacking our soldiers is not; issuing manifestos is more of the usual clumsy communist claptrap; and obtaining revolutionary taxes is pure and simple banditry. But these would all be mere arguments. The fact is, the CPP-NPA claims the status of a revolutionary government. This fundamental claim affects all its actions, and it is according to this claim that all its actions must be judged. Which is why, in my mind, considering the totality of its beliefs and behavior, it cannot be considered primarily a terrorist organization. To borrow a Chinese style of phrasing ideas, it is "waging people's war with terrorist characteristics."

Almost gone

YOUNG BLOOD

Simon Louis Errol E. Torres

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I ALWAYS feel like an old man resting on his rocking chair whenever I hear someone begin a story with the line, "Gone are the days..." Like: Gone are the days when little girls played *piko* on the street and mastering tricks in *sipa* preoccupied the boys. Gone are the days when one could simply open the window and let the wind blow in if one needed fresh air. Gone are the days when watching Kuya Germs on TV was cool. Things like that.

Recently, as I was looking for my high school diploma in our family's antique cabinet, I found an old love letter from my sister's suitor written when they were still in high school (my sister is now happily married with two kids). The paper was already turning yellow and the corners were partly torn due to some rat's unwelcome attention, but the ink was still clear and the words were very much readable. The letter was filled with poetic clichés like "the stars shining bright at night," "beauty beyond compare," "gentle wave of your soft and silky black hair" and other lines one can easily find in the lyrics of old country songs or Christmas carols. It all sounded very funny, but sweet nonetheless.

I quietly read the one-page letter and when I finished, a little smile was playing on my lips. Then taking a deep breath, I whispered with regret, "Gone are the days."

Gone are the days when we wrote love letters like we used to. Gone are the days when we struggled so hard picking the right words for that precious person we loved. Gone are the days when writing love letters was not silly and old-fashioned but heartwarming and noble. Gone are the days of poetry and romance, for that matter.

At present, we are so obsessed with the supposed benefits of modern science and technology that we turn blind to their perilous effects on our human sensitivity and skills. They slowly put our minds in a box and compel us to be satisfied with whatever is fast and available. Our warm patronage of e-mail and text messaging, for instance, has modified our attitude toward matters of the heart and turned them into something bleak and insensible. We are content with those forwarded messages with a letter "u" with two dots above at the end. We seldom consider the fact that great rhymes don't necessarily mean affection. Words of the heart can never be abbreviated. And as my friend's grandfather, who never fails to impress us with his sentimental and profound Tagalog, avers, "There's nothing romantic when you call your love one Chuvachoochoo."

I remember the first time I wrote a love letter. I was in sixth grade and it was addressed to a pretty classmate. I still carry in my mind a picture of me spraying my mother's perfume on a piece of paper and infusing that pebble-like thing called "kisses" on the ink tube of my ball pen. I am without any worldly charm so my letter came out plain and simple with statements like "I like you" and "I like your face." And being the shy boy that I was at the time, the only one who was able to read the letter was the pink envelope into which it was inserted. And then, eventually, the trash can in my room. The tragedy of an innocent love.

When in my senior year in high school I wrote a letter professing my affection to a girl, the words have meanings and every stroke of my hand was a work of art. Each sentence was a butterfly flapping its wings. Every paragraph was a smooth sound of the violin. I remained shy, but with a little help from a friend, the folded piece of paper managed to fly and land on her hands.

It made her heart swoon, she admitted in her equally lyrical reply. And then, eventually, I experienced the sweetness of my first kiss. The triumph of a young love.

We now live in a fast-paced world. We tend to find attractive things that are swift and efficient. We want things to happen with one push of a button. There's nothing wrong with it since it's one of the signs of progress, but with such convenience, we compromise something far more beautiful, something extraordinary and quite irreplaceable: the magic of experiencing love.

From where I stand, it's like selling our emotions at a very low price. We treat falling in love nowadays as if it were just another commodity. Practicality has transformed us so much that our feelings have become secondary. Think, for example, of those lovers who fall for each other through the Internet. Love these days is something like "with a wink of an eye, you're mine." Whatever happened to that thing called romance?

If there's anyone who is not in the habit of writing love letters, it's probably the guy. Writing love letters frightens most members of the male kingdom who seem to think that it weakens their aura of masculinity. Poetry and other mushy stuff belong to the female and the loners in this universe.

But crafting love letters is not a sign of weakness or impotence. Expressing yourself and admitting without reservation how you feel never deplete the personality but rather strengthen it. To think otherwise is foolish.

It's so sad that people don't write love letters like before. We leave writing to the novelists, poets and hopeless romantics. We are a generation satisfied with the mass-produced passages embedded in greeting cards that we vainly try to personalize with our signatures. The accessibility of cellular phones and the SMS craze have not only taught us wrong grammar but also make it easy for us to make speedy but often empty and tasteless declarations of sentiments and passion. Technology has brought us closer to people dear to us but also poisoned our sense of creativity. We are saving trees in exchange for a part of our humanity.

Take a rest from striking those worn-out computer keyboards and savor the thrill of doing it the old way. One need not kill a rooster for a quill. There's no need to turn off the lights and be guided by an archaic lamp or a burning candle. Simply sit down and write, with all honesty, what and how you feel for that person who never fails to brighten up your day, how each moment with him or her brings joy to your heart, how your life has changed from the day the two of you met. Wake up the slumbering poet within you. Let your deep feelings guide the movement of your hands. Be surprised by how romantic you can be.

Simon Louis Errol E. Torres, 22, has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

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Population control is fascism

IT is good that the INQUIRER editorial of March 8 put it on record that the country's population growth rate is 1.84 percent. Rep. Edcel Lagman and the population control lawmakers always put it at 2.36 percent. They say that this "high" growth rate should be curbed, thus their bill to limit families to two children each. So, the growth rate is really much lower. Would Lagman et al. give up their bill?

What is surprising is that while the INQUIRER says that the growth rate is in fact much lower, and that the population planners of the United Nations predict a "moderate" growth rate of 1.84 percent, the editorial still insists that the country "could conceivably do better with a lower population growth rate." How low? It does not give an answer.

What we know is that demographers and scientists put the health replenishment rate of any population at above 2 percent—that's the level in which the aging population could be supported by a younger population without demographic damage. What we are saying is that in all these talks about arresting "overpopulation," none of the population control fanatics and supporters can scientifically state the proper population growth rate. This is what we have been saying all along: population controllers do not respect science.

The editorial defends "Ligtas Buntis" as a family planning education program. The name itself is a giveaway: it portrays pregnancy as unsafe, thus the need to safeguard the female species by contraceptive methods. How much money will be spent on such a program that subliminally casts pregnancy negatively? It is money that should have gone to poverty alleviation. Thus, pro-lifers always insist that it's not overpopulation that is the culprit (in the first place, we're not overpopulated; we have a healthy population growth rate). The problem is mismanagement of resources—and corruption.

The editorial also cites Malthus as advocating education. But Malthus was talking about education in the context of a doomsday scenario of runaway population—a scenario that has not materialized, which should show that his science is as quack as that of the population control fanatics. Condorcet, a great scientist, was able to disprove Malthus' theory. But who's citing Condorcet?

The INQUIRER is naïve in backing the challenge of Lagman et al. to debate with the bishops. It was Lagman et al. who limited the participation of opposers to their bills in the committee hearings, which were the proper avenues for what he calls "debates." But their strong-arm tactics to silence the opposition is typical of population control, which is really fascism and social engineering. The INQUIRER, by falling for Lagman's silly dramatics and agitprop, becomes a party to fascism.

—NICCOLO BERNARDO,
Science and Technology editor,
The Varsitarian,
University of Sto. Tomas,
España, Manila

The uselessness of a national ID

SENATE President Franklin Drilon noted at the Kapihan sa Manila that every civilized country in the world, including the United States which is the champion of democracy and privacy, practically has an ID system. (PDI, 2/21/05) But columnist Neal H. Cruz thinks that the most practical reason against an ID system is the uselessness of it all. (PDI 2/23/05)

Between Drilon and Cruz, I believe the latter. Why? If the ID system were indeed useful, the Americans could have prevented the Sept. 21, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Center in New York, which was worse than the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

—ELIGIO M. PASTORIN,
92 Paraiso St.,
Parang, Marikina City

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Choices for now and tomorrow

THE PRESENT contentious debates and interminable delay in approving the VAT bill, which is one of the drastic measures that will stave off a serious financial crisis in the government, reminds one of France in 1789—after the French Revolution—faced with a "vast public debt, which eventually ruined national credit and threatened the country with bankruptcy." Necker, then the French minister of France, and renowned as a great economist, proposed reforms, among them, tax reform, considered a drastic measure.

But the French Assembly dilly-dallied and flip-flopped, even after a brilliant speech by Mirabeau, defending the tax measure. For the third time, Mirabeau rose to debate against a formidable opposition, and in one impassioned moment exclaimed: "Hideous bankruptcy is here...yet you deliberate!"

President Macapagal-Arroyo aptly and forthrightly said it, no doubt from the bottom of her heart: "If we don't make the tough choices today, there will be no choices for us tomorrow."

—EDMUNDO H. ESCALANTE,
president,
Integrated Bar of the Philippines,
Sorsogon Chapter

NPA killing tamaraws, too?

I AM writing this letter—through the INQUIRER because of its following—in the hope of bringing the attention of concerned agencies and the general public to matters concerning the protection of endangered animals.

After a recent encounter between government troops and the New People's Army at Calintaan, Occidental Mindoro, government soldiers recovered 10 kilos of tamaraw meat along with subversive documents from the rebels' camp.

We all know that the tamaraw is an endangered species that needs protection, especially because it is rare and found only in the Philippines.

Environment Secretary Mike Defensor should look into the matter and take appropriate action. He should also promulgate stricter laws to avoid the extinction of the tamaraw. Also, the NPA should be condemned by the public for slaughtering an endangered animal for food.

Let us not wait until the day when our precious tamaraws will just vanish from our forests. Let us help each other preserve our flora and fauna.

—MARIO B. ESCOBAR,
Naujan, Oriental Mindoro

The challenges of priesthood

ARCHBISHOP Oscar Cruz hit the nail right on the head when he exhorted parents not to force their sons to enter the priesthood. (PDI, 3/2/05)

Lack of vocation manifests itself sooner or later, as with the case of the 23 diocesan Filipino priests who chose to leave their calling last year.

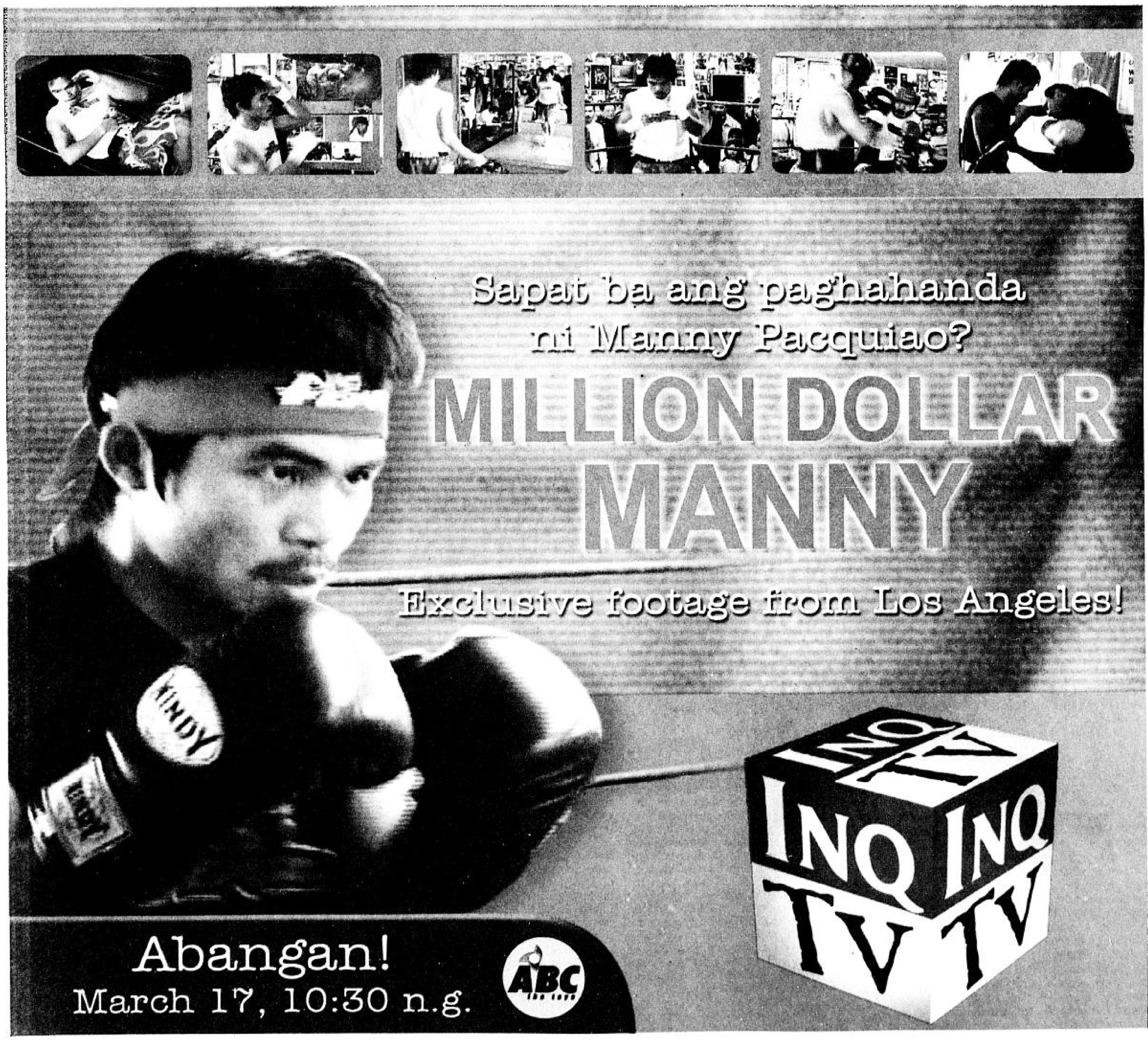
Another reason is economic. A priest does not have a fixed income. They work seven days a week, administering the parish, organizing basic ecclesiastical communities, hearing confessions, raising funds for charities, attending or presiding at meetings of 20 (on the average) lay organizations in a medium-sized parish; and on Sunday, they administer the most important activity of their chosen career—Holy Mass.

While I understand some dioceses in the Philippines have some form of retirement insurance for priests, the pension is so small it is not enough to meet even just their basic needs, not to mention medicines or hospitalization when they become ill. I know of a priest who was reduced to begging to pay for his hospitalization and surgery.

There are no available data, but most of those who entered the priesthood that I know of come from poor but big families. Their parents have to seek help from their better-off relatives, neighbors and friends for regular supply of mosquito nets, clothes and cash contributions to support their sons in the seminary.

It behooves the Catholic Church in the Philippines to pay regular salaries to their priests, for them to send to their parents or siblings so that they can at least help alleviate their family's pitiful poverty. After all, priests cannot live on prayers alone.

—STEPHEN F. SERGIO,
3 Adelfa St.,
Tahanan Village,
Parañaque City



INQBOX
Question of the Week
What do you think should be done to the vendors in Bohol who sold the cassava snacks that resulted in the deaths and poisoning of young school kids?
Win this *Inquirer mug
Senders of d best 20 texts as publishd in Tuesday's INQBOX wil each receiv an *Inquirer Mug! Ü
Key in: inquirer box name/age/city/message.
Text [illegible]
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
(Maximum of 160 characters)
Metro Manila winners can call Jane at 8978808.
Provincial winners can text:
[illegible] name/city/mailing address
[illegible] or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them.

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Solon backs Batangas 'Juetengate' probe

CALAMBA CITY—A Cavite lawmaker asked the House of Representatives to investigate *jueteng* operations in Batangas and the rest of the country, following reports of involvement of top officials in the illegal gambling.

Saying he had enough of the national government's "hypocrisy," Rep. Jesus Crispin Remulla (3rd District, Magdalo) filed House Resolution No. 665 requesting the committee on public order and security "to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the unabated *jueteng* activities in the country."

"I just cannot stand this government's hypocrisy of turning a blind eye to *jueteng* operations despite the fact that gambling activities have been unabated and some officials are profiting from it," Remulla told the INQUIRER in a mobile phone interview.

He said it was worthy to note that more than four years after Joseph Estrada was ousted from office, *jueteng* activities continued to exist even in his home province of Cavite and in Batangas that linked the governor of the province and one of its congressmen.

"Whatever happened four years ago is certainly related to whatever is happening now," he said, referring to reports that protection money from *jueteng* reaches even Malacañang.

He said the relentless campaign of the government and the penalties prescribed by the existing laws and ordinances on *jueteng* "have not discouraged or stamped out this pernicious activity."

But while he was asking the committee to "recommend measures for the eradication" of the illegal numbers game, Remulla said the legalization of *jueteng* "seemed to be the most logical way of stopping this problem."

He said he was likewise hoping that information gathered from the House hearings could help lawmakers decide whether to make *jueteng* legal or pass laws seeking stricter penalties proscribing it.

"If the government can legalize gambling through Pagcor (Philippine Games and Amusement Corp.), why not legalize *jueteng*, which is more in the *pang-masa* scale?" he said.

"In that way there will be more transparency in the handling of the (*jueteng* money) and probably stop corruption in the police and the military," Remulla added.

He said in Luzon alone, operators earn tens of millions of pesos in just a day.

"A certain percentage of these collections allegedly go to the protection racket composed of several government officials," he said in the resolution.

Remulla said the government could also put up "social funds" from bets placed by *jueteng* aficionados.

He said the government could use this money to fund basic social services projects for the poor Filipinos. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Inmate slain in riot

BALANGA CITY—An inmate was killed while three others were hurt when a riot broke out at the Bataan provincial jail here on Thursday. Leonardo Laguerta, officer-in-charge of the provincial jail, said Tereso Asyo, 30, who was jailed for car theft and homicide in June 2004, was found dead after the 20-minute riot. Asyo suffered from a stab wound. Wounded were Manuel Busa, Jack Baret, and Joel Dianon. Laguerta said the riot started after jail officials decided to change the cell assignments of prisoners when they learned of an escape plan of 10 inmates. *Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Cagayan cop nabbed

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A policeman was arrested after he allegedly escorted two trucks carrying sawn lumber along the National Highway in Iguig, Cagayan, on Wednesday. Senior Supt. James Andres Melad, Cagayan police director, said PO1 Regardy Pascual, of the Cagayan police's special operations group, accompanied the delivery of at least 2,500 board feet of lumber to dealers in this city. Melad said he did not believe Pascual's explanation that he had intercepted the trucks and was escorting these to the provincial police headquarters for investigation when he was arrested. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Vendor dies in crash

TANDAG, Surigao del Sur—A meat vendor here died early morning on Saturday after the motorcycle he was driving slammed into a tricycle with six passengers on board. Richard Barbosa, 28, suffered a broken skull and died on the spot. The tricycle's driver and two passengers seated in the front suffered serious injuries, while another passenger suffered a cut in the forehead. Police investigators said Barbosa had just come from a drinking spree and was going home using the unregistered motorcycle, which had no working lights, when he hit the tricycle on the other side of the road. *Bert Pacate, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Top 3 rights violators

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Commission on Human Rights in Central Mindanao said that police, military and government officials were the top three human rights violators in the region. Dolores Tolosa, CHR-12 officer-in-charge, said most of the 30 human rights cases now pending with her office involve police, military and government officials. Tolosa urged residents to remain vigilant to protect their rights. The CHR regional office in Central Mindanao had just transferred from Cotabato City to this city. She said she was hoping that by moving here, the CHR would be able to reach out to more clients and serve them more efficiently. Central Mindanao includes the cities of Koronadal, Tacurong and Kidapawan, as well as the provinces of Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Estafa vs city officer

CITY OF CALAPAN—A housewife here has filed an estafa case before the Ombudsman against a city official for falsification of her signature. In her complaint, Karen Frane alleged that Apolonia Perez, city personnel officer, had released the salaries of her husband, Victor, from October 2004 to January 2005 by falsifying her signatures. Victor has been on leave from the city hall for a contractual job in Dubai from June 2004 until June 2005. Frane said in her sworn affidavit: "I felt betrayed that while I thought my husband would not receive his salaries anymore, I had to pay from his hard-earned money P12,731 for his loan payments, [when] his salaries continued to be disbursed by the treasury office without any proper authorization using my falsified/forged signatures." The INQUIRER reached Perez for her side but she said she was advised by her lawyer not to give a statement yet. *Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Ex-cop charged

CITY OF CALAPAN—The National Bureau of Investigation-Calapan District Office has filed cases of robbery and frustrated homicide at the city prosecutor against Franklin Abas, a former city police, and Paulino Abas, both residents of Baco, Oriental Mindoro. NBI documents said that at about 7 p.m., March 1 in Barangay Sta. Isabel, the two suspects, aboard a motorcycle, blocked overseas worker Benito Silang, who was then driving his van with two companions. The two suspects allegedly took about P10,000 from Silang, who was stabbed in different parts of the body by Franklin when he refused to give his money. Silang was rushed to the hospital but survived the attack. Supt. Alexander Aceveda, city chief of police, said he had left the case to the NBI *Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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DAVAO DAY

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A child performer is all made up and costumed during a street performance at the celebration of the 68th Araw ng Dabaw Festival in Davao City.

Vidal opposes division of Cebu into 4

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal has strongly opposed the move of three legislators to divide Cebu into four separate provinces.

"The Church also desires economic growth for its flock and is always on the lookout for what is best for her faithful. Yet, the Church would never put her faithful in the shadows of darkness . . .," he said.

Vidal declared his position in a message he sent on Monday during a summit called by Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia to bring together those who were against the break-up the province into four.

Among those who attended the summit were Garcia, municipal local officials, business leaders and representatives of non-government organizations.

Cebu island is a narrow strip of land about 200 kilometers long and about 41 km at its widest with a total land area of 5,088 sq km. It has eight congressional districts, six cities and 47 towns.

But Cebu Representatives Simeon Kintanar (second district), Antonio Yapha (third) and Clavel Asas-Martinez (fourth), all serving their last terms, filed separate bills in Congress, seeking to divide Cebu into four provinces.

Kintanar wants his district be converted into Cebu del Sur while Yapha seeks the conversion of his district into Cebu Occidental. Martinez, on the other hand, wants her district be made into Cebu del Norte.

The towns and cities under the first, fifth and six districts will be part of the original Cebu province, separate of the three other provinces.

The three bills have been referred to the House committee on local government chaired by Negros Oriental Rep. Emilio Macias.

In a three-page statement, Cardinal Vidal said the division of Cebu into four provinces would project a deficit of P488,415,171.48.

"This is a ready manifestation that such endeavor to divide the Province of Cebu is unsustainable and is not viable," he said.

He said that if the 3rd District becomes Cebu Occidental, the province will be no better than Marinduque with an average income of P217,471,000 and would rank 74th in provincial standings.

Cebu Occidental, he added, would also have an income smaller than that of Basilan's P264,500,000.

Vidal said that if the fourth district becomes Cebu del Norte, it would suffer a deficit of P102,549,647.37. It was not clear where the Cardinal based his figures.

Cordillera rebs urged tribes to unite vs mining

BAGUIO CITY—The Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) has called on tribal communities in the Cordillera to set their conflicts aside and prepare to wage war against the entry of mining companies in the region.

In a message sent by e-mail to the INQUIRER, Ka Filiw, CPDF spokesperson, said tribal elders and leaders should lead in forging inter-tribal unity against mining firms that would stake a claim on their ancestral lands.

"Instead of waging tribal war, the tribal warriors throughout the Cordillera can constitute themselves as community self-defense units. They can help by preventing the entry of or by driving away mining surveyors and confiscating their equipment," Ka Filiw said.

The CPDF's statement came following the Supreme Court's recent decision that affirmed the constitutionality of the 1995 Philippine Mining Act.

Development

"The government and the mining corporations claim that the revolutionary mass movement and the people are against development. The issue is for whose development and benefit are these mining corporations?" he asked.

In a resolution adopted by Cordillera youths in the recent Indigenous Youth Summit here last week, the more than 70 delegates called the Supreme Court decision as an act of injustice to indigenous peoples.

A resolution adopted by the summit's delegates said indigenous peoples do not reject development "but we demand that our development be determined by ourselves to our own priorities."

"We demand respect for our rights to our territories, lands and natural resources and that under no circumstances should we be forcibly removed from our lands," the resolution said.

Anxiety

Small-scale miners from Kalinga, Abra, Mt. Province and Benguet also expressed their anxiety over the possible takeover of their operations by at least two mining companies.

"Our people are ready to sacrifice their lives to defend themselves from the entry [of mining firms]. We have done this before and we will do it again," said Casiano Luginday, a small-scale miner from the Banao Bodong Association of Kalinga.

He was referring to Kalinga's experience on the Batong Buhay mines, whose wastes reportedly destroyed ricefarms in Tabuk and the Pasil River.

Luginday said residents, angry at the impact of the mine's operations on the environment, stormed the Batong Buhay mine site and cut off its power lines.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor has said mining provides hope that the country could finally solve its budget deficit. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Execs declare Mt. Apo open again to climbers

KIDAPAWAN CITY—After four years of being closed to Mt. Apo climbers, the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) has finally issued its go signal to the local government here for the opening of its trails toward the country's highest peak.

The decision was reached after local officials met sometime in January to discuss the possibility of opening the trails during the summer season.

A simultaneous clean-up drive and the conduct of the "trails carrying capacity" assessment was immediately initiated in compliance with a PAMB requirement issued sometime in the year 2000.

Edgar Paalan, the city's environment and natural resources officer, said the determination of a campsite's carrying capacity is necessary to determine the maximum number of people and the amount and type of use that can be accommodated in an area without harming the environment.

The PAMB in 2000 closed the country's highest peak to all mountaineers due to the documented destruction the seasonal climbing activities had caused over the years.

During the clean-up drive, a total of 104.5 sacks of garbage weighing two tons had been collected.

"This year will be a different climb because we are going to conduct an orientation for all climbers passing the Kidapawan trail and ensure that they will follow established climbing policies, or else, we will blacklist them and will not allow them in future climbs," Mayor Rodolfo Gantuangco said.

He also said use of firewood for cooking and campfire activities will be strictly prohibited as these were noted to have contributed greatly to the destruction of Mt. Apo's environment.

PDI Mindanao Bureau

Vizcaya board seeks GMA help on firm's unpaid taxes

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—The provincial board has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to resolve the controversy involving its claim for payment of real property taxes from a foreign company operating a power-generation facility in the province.

The board on Wednesday passed a resolution asking the President to direct the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and the Department of Finance (DoF) to allow the California Energy-Casecnan to pay the province P229 million in real property taxes.

CE Casecnan is an American firm that owns and operates the Casecnan Multi-purpose Irrigation and Power Project (CMIPP). The CMIPP was completed in 2001 under a 25-year build-operate-transfer agreement with the national government.

The resolution came on the heels of an appeal made by Gov. Luisa Cuaresma to Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo to "personally relay" to the President the appeal of the residents regarding CE Casecnan's unpaid obligations.

"I know that through your intercession, we will be able to collect these taxes, which will be of great help in the development of the province and of the people of Nueva Vizcaya," Cuaresma told Representative Arroyo during his visit here on Thursday.

CE Casecnan officials last week blamed the NIA and the DoF for not allowing the company to pay its taxes to the local governments of Nueva Vizcaya and Nueva Ecija.

Raymund Cunningham, CE-Casecnan general manager, said the company was merely complying with its contractual obligations under a "supplemental agreement" with NIA and DoF in 2003.

Lawyer Linda Castillo, CE Casecnan vice president for legal affairs, said NIA was concerned that the payment of real property taxes by their company might serve as a precedent for other claims from other irrigation projects.

The board, however, dismissed Cunningham's explanation.

"We were not born yesterday. The Sangguniang Panlalawigan believes that the agreement was a device for [CE Casecnan] to avoid or delay payment of real property taxes under a color of legality," said Vice Gov. Jose Gambito.

"We know that the contractual limitation imposed on the company to pay its real property taxes was a mere afterthought, after the company was assessed by the provincial government." *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Patients' rights bill acceptable to docs sought

BAGUIO CITY—A medical trainer here has proposed a tripartite group to come out with a patient's rights bill acceptable not only to patients but also to doctors.

Dr. Rolando Santos, a urologist and outgoing training director of the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center, said the Department of Health, Professional Regulatory Commission and the medical specialty societies should join hands in coming out with policy of evaluating the performance of doctors.

Santos said the DOH controls the licensing of clinics and health facilities while the PRC suspends or revokes the licenses of erring doctors.

"Why don't they come together and come out with a way for the doctors to police their own ranks?" he asked.

"I myself would not want to face a panel which does not understand the situation in a medical setting," he said.

He said he wanted the PRC, DOH and medical societies to come out with a tripartite panel to look at erring doctors the same way as the military has its own court martial.

"It will not deter a patient to go to a court. But if I were investigated by my peers, my fears would be lessened because they know my situation," he said.

Increased costs

Santos said Senate Bill 588 (an act declaring the right of patients and prescribing penalties for violations thereof) would not only increase health costs but would also intimidate doctors.

He said the United States is already reeling from its own patients' rights act, from which SB 588 was patterned after.

"Why should we go on a system which the US is already trying to undo?" Santos asked.

"Filipino doctors have the best 'clinical eye,'" he said.

'Clinical eye' is an accepted medical term for the acquired skill to diagnose a patient by taking the medical history of the patient and physical examination with minimum laboratory testing, he said.

Santos said because of the Third World setting in the Philippines, most Filipino doctors have acquired the "clinical eye."

But with the present bill, the doctors would have to make the required tests to be on the safe side.

Santos acknowledged, however, that some doctors were indeed careless in their diagnosis and treatment, much to the detriment of patients.

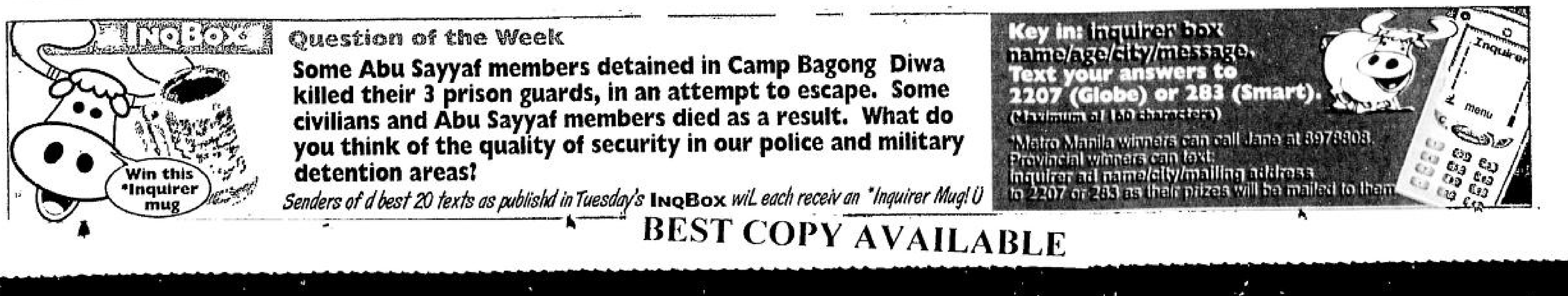
Careless

He said some hospitals and medical societies evaluate the doctors but the judgment and evaluation are only for training purposes.

He also said some medical societies are "doctor-biased."

Santos, founding president of the local chapter of the Philippine Society of General Surgeons, said he once attended a meeting of a medical society when the subject of peer review came up.

"I asked them, 'Are patients accessible to the panel?' and they were taken aback. They were not thinking of the patients at all," he said. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*



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Question of the Week

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4,000 teachers ask for GMA help on GSIS woes

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WAR REMNANTS BEN MOSES EBREO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

A police officer inspects two World War II-vintage bombs found inside the compound of a hotel in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya March 15. The bombs were manufactured in China.

COTABATO CITY—Some 4,000 elementary and high school teachers in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur yesterday called on President Macapagal-Arroyo to address their problem with the Government Service Insurance System.

The teachers skipped their classes and trooped to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Complex here where the regional Department of Education holds office.

"Madam President, prove to us teachers that you are against corruption," the teachers, still wearing uniforms, said.

The rally, also attended by several hundred high school and elementary pupils, came while ARMM is hosting the visit of Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines Peter Sutherland who led the launching of an P821-million local government support program.

Due

"Give what is due us," the teachers chanted at DepEd-ARMM officials.

"Get out of your air-conditioned offices and face us," one streamer said.

They blamed Dr. Leovigilda Cinches, DepEd-ARMM officer in charge, and Gov. Parouk Hussin for the mess and called for their resignation.

Cinches was not in her office when the teachers converged inside the ARMM Complex at 8:30 a.m. Hussin was in Manila.

The rally was aired over local radio stations.

Mayor Tocao Mastura of Sultan Kudarat took the cudgels for the teachers who, according to him, have suffered long enough.

"There's corruption in the higher echelon of DepEd, we suspect," he told reporters.

Mastura, along with other local government executives in Maguindanao, vowed to support "our second parents" in their cause "because nobody helps them."

Accumulated

DepEd-ARMM has accumulated non-remitted contributions and premiums of up to P968 million when Hussin assumed office. He is the DepEd-ARMM regional secretary in concurrent capacity. He said he inherited the problem from previous ARMM officials.

Last year, DepEd-ARMM signed an agreement with the Department of Budget and Management and GSIS for direct remittance of teachers' contributions and premiums to the financial institution.

Before that agreement, funds for teachers' obligations to GSIS passed through the office of the regional governor from DBM then to DepEd-ARMM which remits the funds to local GSIS office.

As of January, according to Hussin, DepEd-ARMM's payable to GSIS is only P396.4 million.

"We are addressing this problem, please have patience," Hussin said in a statement here.

But the teachers claimed GSIS continues to deny them of loan privileges unless they are fully paid.

Deductions

Mastura narrated that one elementary teacher told him that she loaned an amount of P70,000 but only received P700 due to deductions and payment of interests.

"This is outrageous . . . the teachers are paying the interest of their premiums and contributions when in fact these are already deducted from their pay," Mastura said.

The GSIS became controversial recently when thousands of pensioners and members protested their failure to receive benefits from the pension fund and their failure to acquire loans.

The GSIS had blamed other government agencies for their failure to remit workers' contributions on time and said some agencies owed hundreds of millions of pesos in unremitted contributions from government employees.

A call for the GSIS chair, Winston Garcia, to resign fell on deaf ears amid speculation that Garcia was appointed to the post in payment of a political debt by the President. Cebu, from where Garcia hails, delivered Ms Arroyo's biggest winning margin in the recent presidential elections. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Hagedorn defends plan on wildlife sanctuary

PUERTO PRINCESA Mayor Edward Hagedorn yesterday said the wildlife sanctuary project of the city government is legal, meritorious and beneficial to its constituents over the short and long term.

Hagedorn, in a press statement, said the 1,000-hectare wildlife sanctuary in Sitios Manaburi Tanarayan, Bahile is in accordance with it's Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) which had been approved by the city council years ago.

"It is ironic because the affected squatter-families who are resisting eviction from the area are not native Palaweños but migrant-fishermen from different parts of the country who had been lured by the city's rich marine resources," Hagedorn said.

Numbers

Hagedorn said there were only 20 squatter-families in the area in 1994. City Hall had issued several notices to these illegal settlers to vacate the area which they ignored. Since then, the squatter population has grown to about 100 families, Hagedorn said.

Despite the delay encountered by the project, the city government has been taking every move to provide a humanitarian and holistic solution to resolve the squatter problem by conducting consultations and offering an appropriate relocation site, housing and other community facilities and amenities to these squatter-families, Hagedorn said.

No compromise

"But they have to go. There is no compromise," he declared.

Hagedorn said the proposed wildlife sanctuary site is classified as a Special Development Area that can be likened to the city's world famous nature conservation parks like the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park and Environmental Estate upon which the city government is empowered to make special development and conservation plans.

Hagedorn said this is clearly spelled out by Section 92 of the Puerto Princesa City Charter which specifically states that the national government cedes to the city government of Puerto Princesa ownership and possession of all lands of public domain within the city.

Priority

In addition, Hagedorn said, the wildlife sanctuary project is a priority project of the city government which is consistent with its strategic economic and social development plan that is firmly anchored in ecotourism, agriculture and fisheries.

"It has been our objective to make Puerto Princesa a park-like city. This is why, aside from the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park and Environmental Estate, the city government has developed other parks," he said.

"Now, we're going to develop the Puerto Princesa Wildlife Sanctuary in Bahile. Why not? The wildlife and rich marine and forest resources have been in the area before the intrusion of these illegal settlers. Besides, their continued illegal stay in the area poses serious threats to the preservation and conservation of wildlife and marine species and resources in the area," Hagedorn said.

In defending the project, Hagedorn also denounced certain advocacy groups who are encouraging the resistance of affected squatter-families.

Bandits attack village

COTABATO CITY—Moro bandits led by Central Mindanao's most wanted man stormed a remote village in North Cotabato and wounded at least four people, the military said yesterday.

Maj. Gen. Raul Relano, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said Pakil Ayunan, who carries a P300,000 bounty on his head, led about a hundred heavily armed men in attacking Barangay Tinimbakan in Banisilan town around 4 a.m. on Tuesday.

"Apparently, land conflict and personal grudge triggered the attack," Relano told reporters.

He said Ayunan's group also torched several houses belonging to terrified residents and that some civilians have actually fled the area.

Relano said government troops from the Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade were tracking down Ayunan and his men.

Ayunan was blamed for the massacre of at least 18 people in Carmen town about 15 years ago.

He was also identified as leader of the group that ambushed and killed about a dozen people, including children, in Barangay Simsiman, also in Carmen a few years later.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front said it received a different version of the attack.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said that the violence in Tinimbakan was actually a result of a clan war. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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INQUIRER *Southern Luzon*

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Floreño G. Solmirano**

Rehab center stays idle after 2 years

By Juan Escandor Jr.
San Fernando, Camarines Sur

FAR ENOUGH to be isolated but not too far to be accessible, the P5-million San Fernando Drug Rehabilitation Center (SFDRC) in San Fernando, Camarines Sur has remained unused for two years due to lack of funds and people to manage it.

"It is a kind of infrastructure project that politicians would build to show to the constituency their accomplishment even as its operational feasibility had been left out," said Teresita Rey, project development officer of the Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC). The council, created by then President Fidel Ramos in 1992, is composed of 12 local government units (LGUs), including San Fernando.

A technical working group (TWG) has been formed to discuss and decide by consensus the orientation and operation of the rehab center. Its members are the MNDC, San Fernando municipal government, Department of Health, and the Philippine National Police.

But, sadly, no one among the TWG members would assume responsibility in providing the center's administrative and operational budget, even for start-up.

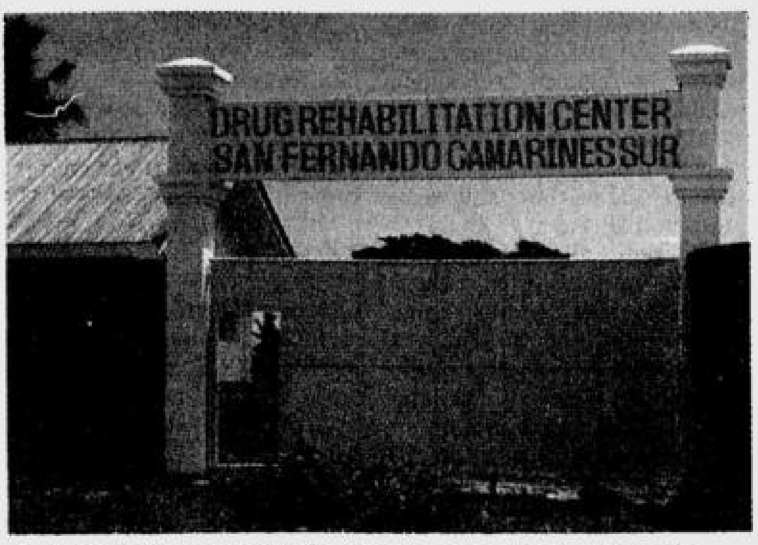
Responding to the situation, Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. pledged to provide the funds through the General Appropriation Act (GAA) of 2004. He also facilitated the construction of the facility from his pork barrel or the Priority Development Fund.

But last year, Congress reenacted the 2003 national budget because it failed to pass the 2004 proposal. This stalled the target start of operations of the center for another year.

Proponent

According to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, Bicol had 39 barangays classified as "seriously affected" by the drug menace and 84 "less seriously affected" in March 2003. It ranked a poor third behind Southern Tagalog and Central Visayas.

In September, 2001, then regional police chief Enrique Galang presented the drug rehabilitation project to Andaya for funding. The next year, the infrastructure facilities were immediately constructed—an access road opening, two buildings for administrative peronnel and for living quarters of staff and patients, and the front perimeter fence—on a 5.1-hectare piece of property donated by the municipality.



ALTHOUGH it was constructed two years ago, the San Fernando Drug Rehabilitation Center in San Fernando, Camarines Sur, has not been used due to funding problems. JUAN ESCANDOR JR.

By December 2002, the center was ready for use.

During the last meeting of the TWG on Dec. 6, 2003, the definite start of operations had already been a problem due to lack of funds and management people, Rey revealed. Andaya, chair of the House appropriations committee, even called up Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, a Bicolana, to request help, but nothing came out of their conversation.

Mayor Sabas Mabulo, who represented San Fernando as the land donor, said the center's operational, administrative, management and personnel budget was again inserted in this year's GAA, and that Andaya had already assured him about this.

The mayor, however, could not ascertain when the SFDRC would open. He said he wanted to make use of the center as a training and seminar house for municipal officials and employees.

Agreement

The MNDC has drafted a contract of agreement that defines the roles of the DOH, PNP and the municipal government, and the rationale for the establishment of the center in accordance with Republic Act No. 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

It mandated the DOH to directly manage and operate the SFDRC and required it to absorb PNP-trained personnel to man the center. The PNP reported that it had already trained 16 of its personnel, but they could not be assigned to full-time work.

Snags

The center's manual of operation had also been drafted, Rey said, but questions arose on how activities could be sustained. It must generate its own funds from its services, but the TWG still has to figure out the details.

One option, Rey said, was socialized payment for services where drug dependents would be charged based on their economic status.

"But who will take care of the indigents' cost of health care? Will it be the LGU, through its social welfare and development office, which will shoulder the maintenance for the six-month period?" she asked.

Theoretically, the TWG has agreed on the general operational nature of the SFDRC, that is, the provision of facilities and mental health management of drug dependents committed there.

Administratively, the center will be provided with enough staff members, medical workers and specialists to handle the psychosocial needs and care of the patients.

Rehabilitation

It also plans to promote a so-called multidisciplinary approach to drug rehabilitation through the preferred use of non-medical detoxication over medical detoxication in expelling accumulated toxic substances from the bodies.

The center further wants to create an atmosphere conducive to healing.

While overall management and administration was seen as maintaining its operational independence, it will ensure close coordination with concerned governments and other line agencies in disposing of its functions and services.

The design of the six-month rehabilitation program covers individual care and services, like psychosocial, medical and laboratory examinations or vocational and recreational therapies. Spiritual activities may also be provided.

The SFDRC will implement a post-care program for 18 months from the release of the drug dependents. The program offers livelihood opportunities as they reintegrate into their families and communities.

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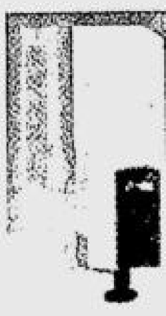

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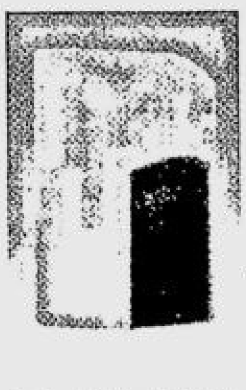

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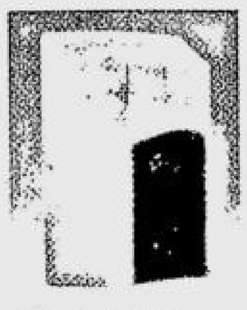
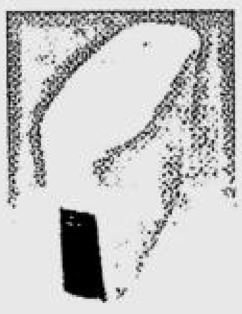
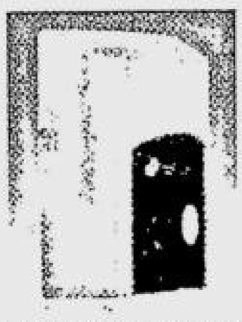


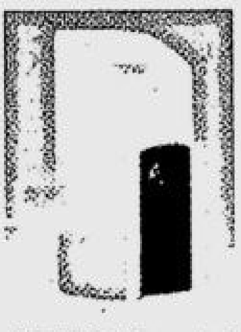
Calmic Sanitizer System
Effective in both W.C.s and Urinals of every design releases a calculated level of Sanitizer fluid with every flush. Three-way action kills bacteria, stops scale and breaks up grease to protect users, reduce maintenance costs and reduce smells at source.



Sanitact Discreet
With this system, problems such as clogged toilet bowls, blocked drain edges, malodour and costly plumbing repairs are easily prevented. Hygienic and odour free - the unique Initial Healthcare Sanitact fluid kills bacteria and eliminates the problem of unpleasant smells in the washroom.



Toilet Seat Sanitizer
Kills bacteria and cleans the toilet seats fast and reliably, giving the confidence that hygiene levels are in your own hands. No main electricity or replacement of existing seats means minimal disruption and fitting costs.



Liquid Soap Dispenser
Fragrant and ultra-hygienic anti-bacterial formulation liquid soap oozes out of a compact push-button dispenser housing a revolutionary pouch protecting the soap from contamination.

Evolutionary Urban Pest Control

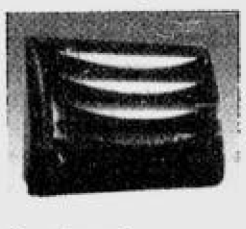
zer●●ption

After setting Rentokil Initial's Research team, the challenge of producing a range of effective pest control methods with enhanced customer benefits without utilizing toxic substances, the result is Zero Option. This is a suite of unique services that provide effective control against all main pest species and is also the most advanced environmentally.

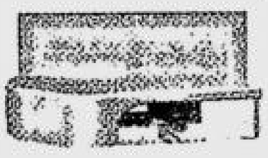
Radar Unit
This revolutionary system contains a sensor which, when set off by rodents treading on a pad, activates doors which seal the mouse or rat inside. Carbon Dioxide is then released into the chamber, eradicating the rodent in a humane and controlled manner.

Monitor Unit
Developed to handle 'high risk' premises where there is a need to eliminate any potential rodent damage or product contamination. The Unit incorporates our own patented pressure pad technology to detect the presence of mice and alert that immediate attention is required.

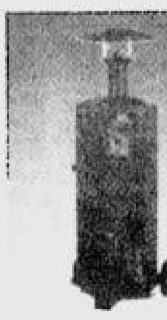
Rat Alarm
The Rat Alarm is a unique unit which is designed to fit inside one of our standard bait boxes. Like the Mouse Monitor, the alarm is activated by a patented pressure pad technology system which is sufficiently sensitive enough to detect even newly weaned rats weighing as little as 60g.



Luminos 3
This product is the latest in highly effective electronic flying insect control methods. Using encapsulation technology, rather than old-fashioned 'zapping', Luminos 3 catches insects on a slow-winding adhesive film which allows no means of escape.



Insect Monitor Unit
This system is very similar in style and construction to the Mouse Monitor Unit, only smaller. Rather than using pressure pad technology, however, the presence of insects is detected when they enter the unit via an infrared beam.



Target
Target units entice mosquitoes through the progressive release of carbon dioxide containing a natural attractant to these pests. In many respects, the unit is imitating a large animal or mammal; providing the prospect of a very attractive blood meal.

Bird Pest Control
Pigeons and gulls are probably the birds noted for being pests. As each site where these pests start to nest may present a different set of problems, a bespoke set of solutions is provided, varying from netting, Avistrand, Larus and audio scaring.

PestNetOnline
Gives you control of your account by capturing information relating to service and inspection and then upload it to a secure website for easy viewing.

RentokilInitial
(Philippines), Inc.

For more information about Rentokil Initial (Philippines), Inc., visit or call their head office at 27F Discovery Centre, 25 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center Pasig City. Tel. no.: (632) 687-0210; Fax no.: (632) 638-9303 / 638-9301. Or log-on to their website at http://www.rentokil-initial.com or e-mail at healthcare@rentokil-initial.com.ph / admin@rentokil-initial.com.ph.

A World of Opportunities

"If you are a team player who is committed to win, who gets on well with people and relishes a challenge, then you have what we are looking for."

- Constante E. Hidalgo, Country Manager

Rentokil Initial (Philippines), Inc. measures success by the growth and achievements of its people. Believing that people are fundamental to strategy and that success will only be achieved through their growth and development, Rentokil Initial is always on the look out for service-oriented team-players.

The continual expansion of the company places even greater emphasis on its need to improve the existing skill sets of all its staff. Rentokil Initial (Philippines), Inc. has a much-deserved reputation for growing and supplying its own management talent - and one of its major challenges is to maintain that supply.

For bright people who want to succeed, Rentokil Initial offers real opportunities. Anyone who joins the company will be assigned to a close knit team within a local branch where he is expected to contribute to its success and be keen to head one of his own when he is ready.

Then, Rentokil trains deserving careerists through its management development programme - across businesses - and abroad. From technician to surveyor or salesman to branch manager and beyond.

In view of the fact that Rentokil Initial (Philippines), Inc. is a worldwide company with a range of businesses, employees can enjoy a breadth of opportunity to develop their skills and career with a secure future.

HQ APL, FPA-Approved

In the face of the country's problem with pests, Rentokil Initial is at the forefront with its exemplary pest management where quality is always paramount. And because quality is inherent in their system, Rentokil Initial ensures that with every treatment, they strictly adhere to the standards as imposed on them by their UK Headquarters. They also see to it that they utilize only FPA-registered pesticides from reputable companies like Bayer CropScience.

For example, in the treatment of subterranean termites that always entails extensive surveys and situation analysis, it is not enough that they help clients get rid of problem termites. Rentokil Initial also provides post-treatment warranty services to make sure that re-infestation does not occur. And that by using only the right chemicals such as Agenda™ from Bayer CropScience, they are able to achieve recommendable termite treatments.

"Highly effective treatment. It's been almost 4 years since the time of Fipronil treatment by Rentokil and until now I didn't see any signs of re-infestation. It's really worth the investment."
- Eileen Theresa Cainglet - dela Paz M.D., Panabo City

"The Termite treatment by Rentokil Initial to Samal Casino Resort buildings using Fipronil has been proven to be very effective. Since the time that they treated the buildings in 2002 until this day, we have not found any traces of live termites or re-infestation. A good termiticide like Fipronil used by a reliable Pest Control operator like Rentokil is guaranteed performance." - Rey P. Lerio, Corporate Secretary, Samal Casino

Congratulations to Rentokil Initial (Philippines), Inc. from BAYER CropScience

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- Fast-Acting
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- Convenient
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Bayer Environmental Science
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MAXFORCE
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AGENDA™

Every professional termite terminator's best weapon.

Professional termite control is a tough job. Mere know-how and technology are not enough. One needs the right **Termite Control Management** that works under rigid conditions. Fortunately, **AGENDA** works best against foraging subterranean termites with these unique mode of actions:

- Activity package uses a product that is effective at ultra-low dose rates
- Non-repellant kills Termites on contact and ingestion
- Dose-dependent
- Active ingredients are transferred from one termite to another thereby managing the colony

Bayer Environmental Science
A Business Group of Bayer CropScience

Don't take communion, 'Ligtas Buntis' folk told

From page A1

Catholic bishop in Misamis Occidental who is urging parishioners supportive of the proposed Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005 (House Bill No. 3773) and the Department of Health's "Ligtas Buntis" to examine their conscience and desist from going to communion. The Catholic Church considers these measures an affront to the sanctity of life.

Msgr. Jesus Dosado, prelate of the Diocese of Ozamiz, yesterday said Catholics supportive of the government's "anti-life policies" were not worthy to partake of the Host, the consecrated bread symbolizing the body of Christ.

Dosado, 65, said many Catholics employed in the government, especially the DOH, were involved in the promotion of artificial birth control methods.

He said they should be reminded that such means of family planning were against the will of God.

The bishop admitted that he did not personally know of local health workers involved in Ligtas Buntis.

But if someone admits to supporting the program, that person will be barred from communion, he said.

Those who choose to keep mum on their stand on the matter can partake of the Host, but they will have to deal with their conscience, he added.

After all, Dosado said, it was not for him to render judgment on one's fitness to go to communion—a symbol of the union of Christ and the faithful.

After Easter

House Majority Floor Leader Prospero Nograles urged his colleagues to settle the arguments over HB 3773 after Easter, the Christian holiday marking the resurrection of Christ.

He said he would recommend that the measure be referred for plenary debate when Congress resumes session after the Lenten break.

"Putting [HB 3773] on plenary debate will open up all the factual bases and data on the population management issue. It won't appear to have been discussed behind closed doors [and will be] open to the public," Nograles said in a statement.

"All interested groups can lobby openly. All congressmen will have to take a stand one way or another," he said.

Nograles said he would prefer a debate on the floor "instead of confining it among members of one or two committees," in order to "erase speculations that the House of Representatives is railroading [the measure]."

He said the lawmakers could gain valuable inputs from the debate, or decide that some provisions in the measure needed "adjustment or rewording."

"This can also help the public fully understand what this bill is all about," he said.

Greatly exaggerated

Economist Bernardo Villegas, a member of the influential Catholic group Opus Dei, claimed on Monday that fears of overpopulation were unfounded.

He said the Philippines should instead watch out for a "demographic winter," or a bigger population of people aged 65 onward and a dwindling population of those belonging to the 0-14 age group.

But the proponent of HB 3773, the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation, disputed Villegas' claim, saying in a leaflet that the prospect of the country suffering a demographic winter was "as distant as about 100 years from today."

"Much of the talk of a demographic winter is greatly exaggerated and can only be regarded as a plain and simple scare tactic to instill fear in people's minds," the PLCPD said.

It added: "It appears to be peddled by people who are simply unaware of population dynamics or, worse, who intend to mislead."

If the country's total fertility rate continues to decline by 0.2 children every five years, replacement fertility of 2.1 children per woman would be reached only by 2040, the group said.

"However, the effects of population momentum would persist for another 60 years before the population ceases to grow, by which time the Philippines' total population would be 240 million," it said.

Free to go

Health workers like former media officer Ligaya Acosta who are opposed to Ligtas Buntis may pack their bags and leave, Dr. Milagros Bacus, health director for Eastern Visayas, told the INQUIRER.

She said that in her personal opinion, "if you don't believe anymore in what your organization is doing, you're free to go."

Bacus, Acosta's former boss and a target of the latter's searing criticism, said there was no truth to allegations that many DOH employees wanted to junk Ligtas Buntis.

"It's better that people go to our regional offices, like the one we have in Tacloban, and see for themselves how supportive our people are of Ligtas Buntis," she said.

Bacus said the program was so "liberal" that it allowed individual workers to decide whether to support it or not.

But she could not say whether the DOH had a clear policy regarding employees refusing to back the program. "We'll deal with that on a case-by-case basis," she said.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit had earlier admitted that he was only "as good as my health workers" in gauging the success of Ligtas Buntis.

As it is, Dayrit practically has no hold over health workers following the "devolution" of the DOH bureaucracy that put it under the jurisdiction of local governments.

Based on faith

Bacus acknowledged that Acosta had made a choice based on faith and personal conviction.

"People have different beliefs, and we don't expect everyone to support the program," she said.

But Bacus took issue with Acosta's allegation that her former superiors had been harassing her since she made public her opposition to Ligtas Buntis and took the side of the Catholic Church.

She said there was no order for health employees not to talk to Acosta or for security guards to refuse her entry at the DOH compound in Tacloban.

Bacus said the DOH was processing Acosta's application for terminal leave and subsequent retirement, which she filed on Feb. 28.

She said Acosta's request that the leave be made effective starting on Feb. 14 could not be granted because the latter went on unofficial absence even before submitting the application.

The leave will be deemed effective starting on March 1, when Bacus' office officially received the document.

Not a doctor

Bacus said much of the misunderstanding with Acosta was a result of the latter's supposed failure to "understand" Ligtas Buntis.

"She's not a doctor, so our levels of understanding are not the same," Bacus said.

Acosta had said that soon after attending a seminar showing the supposedly evil effects of contraceptives, she engaged in an extensive research that eventually led her to the conclusion that Ligtas Buntis was "deceptive and highly immoral."

Informed choice

Bacus denied Acosta's allegation that the DOH was exclusively promoting contraception despite its promise to also educate people on natural family planning methods.

"We're telling [the target clients] everything, showing them the advantages and disadvantages of different [family planning] methods, so they will have an informed choice," Bacus said. *With a report from Christian V. Esguerra*

Pacquiao fight blockbuster in Vegas

From page A1

On the other hand, Morales was a plus-110 underdog. A bet of $100 on Morales would pay $110.

It was erroneously reported here that a $110 wager on Morales would yield $100.

Yesterday, Pacquiao opened a minus-120 favorite. (Bettors must wager $1.25 for each $1 they're trying to win on Pacquiao.)

The take-back on Morales is plus-105. (Bettors win $1.05 for each $1 they put on Morales.)

The odds are expected to tighten, if not totally even up, with the arrival of Morales in this gaming city.

Like Marvin Hagler

Puerto Rican cutman Lenny de Jesus, who will be in Manny Pacquiao's corner, agreed that the March 19 super bout has the makings of an Ali-Frazier classic.

But De Jesus nodded and made a thumbs-up sign when told the fight could spawn a Hagler-Hearns type of battle.

Reason: both Pacquiao and Morales are all-out action fighters.

Hagler could be likened to Pacquiao, Morales to Hearns.

In an unforgettable fight, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, one-time Manila visitor, stopped Thomas "Hitman" Hearns in the third round of their middleweight bout at Caesar's Palace here in 1985.

Morales could indeed be bigger, but Pacquiao trainer Freddie Roach said he would be happier that way.

"Size won't be a problem. Morales will be bigger but slower. He will have a hard time dealing with Manny's quickness and speed."

Morales vows war vs Pacquiao

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—The frail visitor who showed up late yesterday for a scheduled war against Manny Pacquiao did not look like the Aztec warrior who held three world boxing crowns.

Erik Morales, weak of voice and wrapped in a thick blue jacket with its collars stiffly rolled, resembled a patient newly released from the hospital.

But he swore he was ready to wage war and emerge victorious in his monumental showdown on Saturday (Sunday in Manila) against the fire-breathing Pacquiao.

Originally scheduled to check in at 5:30 p.m., Morales arrived at the MGM Grand Hotel three hours late, long after a mariachi band, which played lilting Mexican tunes to glorify his arrival, had left the hotel main lobby.

Morales came 10 hours after Pacquiao registered an $800 triumph in the black jack tables at the MGM casino grounds, where the Filipino boxing superstar, with a band of followers, strayed off after a buffet breakfast yesterday.

Morales did not look set to immediately do battle, unlike the bearded, hefty Pacquiao who checked in a day earlier, ripe and ready for a brawl.

Reporters had to keep close and strain to get what Morales had to explain that Pacquiao is a strong and good fighter and that he was looking forward to a hard fight.

Severe diet

If Morales did not appear sharp after a long trip from Mexico, it could all be due to a severe diet in a struggle to check his poundage.

Pacquiao, on the other hand, has been eating regularly to fuel his intense workouts.

It had been reported that the Pacquiao fight could be the last in the super featherweight for Morales, who has been having a terrible time making 130 pounds.

Morales could appear to have lost some edge in his struggle with the scales but he can be expected to come with everything—*con todo*—when he squares off with Pacquiao at the MGM Garden Arena Saturday evening.

Morales will blossom into a strong, fiery warrior again after the weigh-in.

Lest critics belittle Morales, based on his arrival appearance, his manager, Fernando Beltran promptly swore his boxer will "come out fighting, no matter what, because he's got balls, a lot of heart."

The manager explained they were delayed despite having left Mexico on time after his group was held by immigration hassles before they were finally cleared for entry in the United States.

All fights difficult

Does Morales have any message for Pacquiao?

"No, *nada*," he told television host Dyan Castillejo, who interviewed Morales in Spanish and later shared details with Filipino reporters.

Does he think the fight will last 12 rounds?

"I'm not sure," Morales said. "But I'm sure it will be a good fight."

Asked if Pacquiao will be his most difficult opponent, Morales shook his head.

"All fights are very difficult," he answered in Spanish.

Pacquiao and Morales, who first met last January in Los Angeles where the fight was announced, face each other again in today's press conference in Studio A of MGM Grand.

Take it easy

Pacquiao completed 161 rounds of sparring in Los Angeles before coming here. He will take it easy, walk and do light calisthenics the next two days in time for the weigh-in.

In fact, Pacquiao felt so sure of his conditioning that he chose to stray off to the gaming tables on the ground floor of his hotel to try his luck at black jack. He was rewarded by three straight perfect 21s, was nearing $2,000 in winnings but later quit with a neat $800 harvest.

It was the first time Pacquiao had been allowed to gamble while still in training.

He later joined a group including GenSan Mayor Pedro Acharon and prayed the rosary in his hotel suite before moving out for dinner with his wife and his group of backers who have all checked in at MGM.

Lacson aide held in US, says NBI

From page A1

a violation of their immigration laws," he said.

But NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the bureau had yet to receive a confirmatory report regarding the supposed arrest of Aquino, a close associate of Sen. Panfilo Lacson when the latter was director general of the Philippine National Police.

"As of this time, we can neither confirm nor deny it," Wycoco said in a text message.

Despite Aquino's supposed detention in New York, the Philippines cannot arrest him, Diaz said. Neither can the Philippine government move to have him extradited, according to State Prosecutor Juan Pedro Navera.

Aquino and Cesar Mancao, also a former police superintendent and an ex-associate of Lacson, are charged with the November 2000 abduction and murder of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito.

Supt. Glenn Dumlao had tagged Aquino and Mancao in the double murder, along with several other members of the defunct Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (PAOCTF), which Lacson headed.

Diaz said the NBI did not have a warrant to arrest Aquino because the Court of Appeals had rejected Dumlao's statement linking Aquino and Mancao to the double murder.

Aquino, a 1988 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, has denied involvement and said investigators were framing him.

Dumlao was also a member of the PAOCTF, and was among those originally charged. His whereabouts are unknown.

Fugitives

Aquino and Mancao were able to flee the country in July 2001 despite hold-departure orders issued in May of that year. They were said to have flown to Hong Kong on fake passports, and later to the United States on genuine travel documents.

The hold orders were issued by then Justice Secretary Hernando Perez in connection with the Labor Day siege of Malacañang, in which the two men were said to have been involved, and for which they, along with several others, were charged with rebellion.

Aquino and Mancao, together with Lacson and several police officers, have also been charged before the Office of the Ombudsman with drug trafficking, murder, kidnapping, serious illegal detention and wiretapping.

The charges were filed by Mary "Rosebud" Ong, a former antinarcotics agent and ex-informant of the PAOCTF.

Extradition

Navera said the Department of Justice could not seek Aquino's extradition in the absence of an arrest warrant against him and Mancao.

"The court has yet to issue a warrant of arrest against them, and we all know that a warrant is essential in an extradition request. So basically, we cannot move against Aquino," Navera, who was among those who handled the preliminary investigation of the Dacer-Corbito case, told reporters.

According to Navera, the case got stalled in September 2002 when Aquino and Mancao challenged before the Supreme Court a ruling of the appellate court in favor of the prosecution.

The lower court had allowed the inclusion of Aquino, Mancao, Supt. Teofilo Viña (now deceased) and SPO3 Allan Villanueva among the 22 accused in the crime. It also discharged Dumlao—whom the prosecution had wanted to use as state witness—from the case.

"The Supreme Court has yet to issue its ruling, so until then, the case cannot proceed," Navera said.

Most knowledgeable

DOJ prosecutors had established that Aquino "appeared to be the most knowledgeable" in the Dacer abduction-murder case and that Mancao was "equally culpable," both of them being the "strategic planners" of the operation.

They had also tagged Viña as the "tactical leader" of some of the suspects because he "took care of the operational assignments" and coordinated with every member of the group through his mobile phone.

Viña was shot and killed by a gunman in Cavite in January 2003. *Margaux C. Ortiz and Armand N. Nocum*

Magsaysay: Guerrilla days prepared him for presidency

From page A1

which the Japanese soldiers were using as communications center and main base for their observation planes.

Residents of San Marcelino and Castillejos got wind of the plans to destroy the airfield. Aware of the Japanese policy of killing 10 Filipino civilians in reprisal for every Japanese soldier killed, the residents immediately sought audience with my father. They pleaded with him to call off the attack.

But the leader in him said he must follow his orders. He listened and weighed the consequences, but he stood his ground.

He then set his plans in motion against the enemies. He was even willing to sacrifice his own family should his decision prove fatal to his town mates.

The townspeople, though doubtful at first, later recognized the wisdom of my father's decision.

Surprise attack

To show their cooperation and support, not one soul squealed to the Japanese. This collective act of faith magnified their confidence in the leadership of Ramon Magsaysay. Who would have thought this little-known *probinsyano* would succeed in this very dangerous operation?

The surprise attack on the San Marcelino airfield was carried out midnight of Jan. 16.

Not leaving anything to chance, he fielded his 12,000-strong guerrilla army for the operation.

My grandmother, Perfecta Magsaysay, recounted the events in her book, "Ramon Magsaysay: Ang Aking Anak."

"The Zambales airfield was tainted with blood ... more than 15 Japanese airplanes, which were on standby, were destroyed.

"The big building, where the planes were housed [and] which received and disseminated information to military installations in Central and Southern Luzon, was completely destroyed and burned," my grandmother said.

"It can be said that almost all the Japanese were wiped out because of the unexpected attack by the guerrillas."

The battle did not last long, according to my grandmother. The guerrillas suffered minimal casualties. Their victory in San Marcelino was followed by several more in other places in Zambales and nearby provinces like Bataan.

Magsaysay's guerrillas were able to clear the way for members of the US Army's 11th Corps, under the command of Gen. Charles P. Hall, when they arrived in Zambales on Jan. 29, 1945.

There was no need for air and naval bombardment to rid the area of Japanese forces because Magsaysay and his guerrillas had practically freed all of Zambales of the Japanese.

No carpet bombing

When he was already President, he recalled that unforgettable time. "The Americans were planning to carpet-bomb the whole province, but I was able to assure them there was no need for that ... The Americans were amazed when they encountered no resistance ... (and) I can say that I do not have one drop of innocent civilian blood on my hands," he said.

Thinking about this episode makes me reflect on the challenges we face in the country, which once knew the grip of a tyrannical invader.

It gives me hope that although our country may now be free, thanks to the blood spilt by the brave and selfless, new leaders will emerge and follow the example of those who came before.

Strong and heroic leaders in our country's time of need is what I pray for.

(Mila Magsaysay-Valenzuela is the daughter of President Ramon Magsaysay. She was 19 when her father died in a plane crash on March 17, 1957.)

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Report a pothole thru text

By Leila B. Salaverria

YOU CAN now send a formal complaint for every pothole you see that makes your temperature rise.

The Department of Public Works and Highways, tasked with the building and maintenance of public roads and buildings, yesterday launched its 2920 text hotline in a bid to reach out to the public and become a more efficient agency.

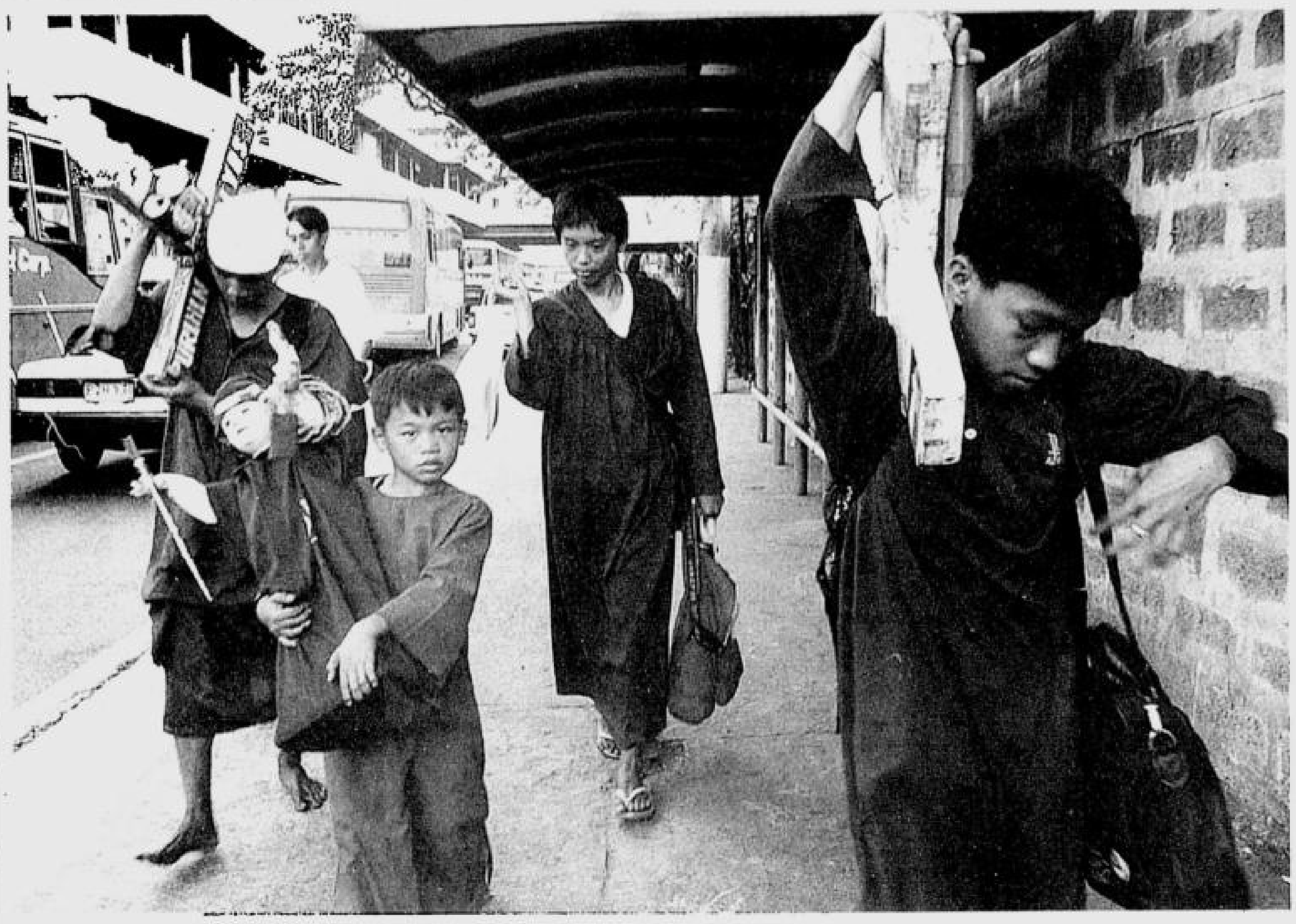
Under the text hotline system, any one can send a complaint via text messaging by typing "DPWH" followed by a space and the message, and then sending it to 2920.

"This is a way for us to feel the pulse and get the active participation of the public so we know what is really going on in the field," said DPWH Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

The system was his way of taking advantage of the popular appeal of text messaging to improve the department's performance, the DPWH head added.

Complaints or comments would be acted upon, and public works officials would be given a deadline to do so, said Ebdane.

Marshals to go after illegal PUVs



EARLY START

JOAN BONDOC

Young members of a religious group calling itself APO walk down Edsa in a pre-Lenten penitential march from Malabon City to Cainta in Rizal.

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is back with a vengeance.

After a court case forced it to relax its drive against illegally operating public utility vehicles, the agency is launching a tougher campaign against so-called colorum vehicles.

The MMDA revealed yesterday that special traffic marshals would be deployed against jeepneys and buses operating without the proper documentation or which operate outside of their authorized routes.

"The traffic enforcers already know which ones they had apprehended previously, so they would be watching out for these illegal vehicles again," said Angelito Vergel de Dios, MMDA Traffic Operations Center executive director.

Vergel de Dios said colorum vehicles aggravate traffic in Metro Manila roads, especially on Edsa.

He said between 600 to 1,000 out-of-line and colorum buses ply Edsa. Their number add to that of some 2,000 buses legally plying the busy thoroughfare daily.

Space takers

"These buses ply the roads take up additional space, which worsen the traffic problem," he explained.

Vergel de Dios said it had led to a situation wherein there were already more buses than passengers on Edsa. This, in turn, has resulted in less earnings for legitimate bus operators.

An MMDA statement said that the special traffic marshals would not wear uniforms.

Operators of PUVs caught illegally operating shall have to pay a P6,000 fine within 30 days, or else pay double that amount.

Apart from the special marshals, all 2,800 MMDA traffic enforcers would be on the lookout for colorum vehicles, Vergel de Dios said.

The traffic director said that the MMDA was earlier forced to relax its drive after transport groups asked the court to suspend its three key traffic schemes.

Dead pilot found in old hangar

By Nikko Dizon

A PILOT of a domestic airline was found dead yesterday morning in an abandoned hangar inside the general aviation area of the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) in Pasay City.

MIAA assistant general manager Angel Atutubo identified the pilot as Edwin Muyco Magbanua, a first officer of Air Philippines.

Atutubo said Magbanua appeared to have hung himself from the ceiling of the Elizalde Hangar's dilapidated mechanics' quarters using a thin nylon cord, but police are still investigating the possibility of foul play.

He added that police had not found a suicide note.

Reports showed that the body was discovered at 11:10 a.m. by Rodnie Prollan, a mechanic.

An Air Philippines representative said Magbanua did not report for work and missed his four scheduled flights since Friday.

Magbanua's colleagues at his former company, Corporate Air, said they saw him at their hangar watching television and reading a newspaper Saturday night. He appeared all right, they said.

They added that Magbanua, a native of Mawab, Davao del Norte, practically had no family after his wife and child were killed in an accident several years ago. Other accounts said that his wife died while giving birth and their child also did not survive.

Arroceros Park row escalates; gate padlocked

By Tina G. Santos

THE CONSTRUCTION of a teachers' center at the controversial Arroceros Park in Manila is about to start, and members of the foundation that developed the site are not happy about it.

On Sunday, the city engineering department delivered truckloads of lumber for the construction of the headquarters of the city school division, said Winner Foundation president Regina Roces Paterno. The foundation had been "caretakers" of the park since 1993 under a memorandum of agreement (MOA).

Paterno claimed that the construction of the structure inside the 2.1-hectare park could not be allowed because it would mean cutting down centuries-old trees and disturbing the natural habitat of some birds and wildlife that had sought shelter in the forest. There are about 3,500 trees planted in the park, she said.

Paterno added that city officials, including Mayor Lito Atienza, had not bothered to advise them about the move. City Hall official Saturnino Disu reportedly replaced the padlock on the park gate placed there by Winner for security and safety reasons.

The city government bought the property from the Land Bank of the Philippines for P65 million. Under the 1993 MOA, City Hall turned over the property to Winner, said Paterno, who added that the foundation had already prepared a 20-year forest development plan for the park. She vowed that her group would continue promoting the park as a venue for environment concerns.

Atienza, however, told the INQUIRER that the city council, over which he had presided when he was vice mayor, had failed to approve the MOA, making it nonbinding. The mayor contends that the park belongs to the city's public school teachers since the money used to buy it came from Manila's special education fund. Atienza stressed that the new building would occupy only a portion of the park, and the rest would remain a botanical garden. Trees would be spared during the construction, he added.

Expert handling of Bicutan crisis

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THE HOSTAGE drama at the high-security jail in Bicutan that ended in a bloodbath could have been prevented had there been coordination between the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Police intelligence had known about the plot by Abu Sayyaf detainees at the Bicutan jail to stage a jailbreak. The PNP promptly relayed the information to its sister agency within the Department of Interior and Local Government.

But the BJMP ignored the warning. Why? Perhaps because the BJMP thought that if it took precautions it would just be heeding a bum steer.

And since the PNP didn't follow up its warning to the BJMP, the bloodbath at the Bicutan jail happened.

***

Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, who deftly handled the Bicutan crisis situation, should now start inter-agency coordination among the bureaus under him.

The biggest offices under the DILG are the PNP, the BJMP and the Bureau of Fire Protection. In the United States, the police and fire departments maintain close coordination, acting as one during emergencies.

Close coordination among the three principal agencies within the DILG is important. For example, the PNP can seek help from the BJMP in solving some crimes by the mere expedient way of asking detained gangsters about the whereabouts of their accomplices still roaming free.

***

Their deft handling of the Bicutan jail crisis has shown that Reyes and newly appointed PNP chief Arturo Lomibao would make excellent partners in crime-fighting.

Lomibao personally took charge of the PNP forces assigned to assault the beleaguered jail while Reyes led the crisis management team.

Both Lomibao and Reyes showed that the government is no weakling or pushover.

If the Bicutan standoff was any indication, future crises of such nature will be dealt with severely.

***

Pinoys, being what they are, always have a joke for every serious situation.

Here's a joke that came out of the text messages about the crisis in Bicutan:

One of the demands of the Abu Sayyaf detainees was for outgoing PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay's term to be extended anew.

Lomibao immediately ordered the assault. *Baka raw mabulilyaso ang kanyang* appointment as PNP chief.

***

After his expert handling of the Bicutan bloodbath, there should be no doubts left about Secretary Reyes' competence running the most powerful department in the government.

It would be a shame if the Commission on Appointments bypassed Reyes' appointment on mere hearsay about his integrity. Most people who have served in the government usually fall victim to unfounded rumors about their honesty.

Reyes is not an exception of a bureaucrat being hounded by adverse but unverified reports about his alleged corrupt activities. Very few officials have been spared from such cruel rumors.

METROBRIEFS

Teachers demand P3,000 salary hike

TEACHERS and government employees poured out into the streets yesterday afternoon to ask the government to grant them a much-needed P3,000 salary increase. Thousands of teachers from all over Metro Manila converged on Mendiola near Malacañang for the all-government employees' rally. At the Department of Education central office in Pasig City, protesting employees expressed their dismay at news that there would no salary increases for government employees and public school teachers this year. *Alcuin Papa*

Wrong number

THE FAMILY of Delfin de la Cruz, who is suffering from spindle cell rhabdomyosarcoma, would like to advise kind-hearted persons who may want to help them raise funds for his medical bills, to call up Carmelita de la Cruz at 0920-5732253, and not 0920-5732553 as previously published.

Pasig City judges moving to new offices

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE PASIG City Regional Trial Court (RTC) is moving back—at the back of City Hall, that is.

The only remaining question is when judges and employees will move into the P70-million, eight-story Hall of Justice.

"The building is very nice compared to our old building," Pasig City RTC executive judge Edwin Villasor told the INQUIRER yesterday as he went around the new offices.

The local government formally turned over the building to the Supreme Court, almost a year after it was inaugurated in April 2004.

A total of 31 branches of the Pasig RTC hold office at the Rizal Provincial Capitol building.

Most of the courts had been there since about half a century ago, Villasor said.

"Our ceiling is damaged. The walls have been eaten by termites," court stenographer Eymard Eje said.

His office, Branch 261, will be among 16 branches to be transferred to the new Hall of Justice.

The remaining 15 would be distributed to cities and towns outside Pasig.

Six branches will be moved to Taguig City, four to Marikina City, another four to San Juan and one to Pateros.

"The Supreme Court wanted the courts to be in the areas specifically where they are hearing the cases," Villasor said.

But when the RTC judges and employees finally move into their new offices only the Supreme Court can tell.

Villasor said that as of yesterday, they had not been informed when to start packing things in their old offices. But he hoped it would be soon.

"We want the City Hall compound to be a one-stop shop for our residents so we are relocating all national offices in just one compound," Pasig Mayor Vicente Eusebio told the INQUIRER.

The Hall of Justice already houses the Office of the City Prosecutor and five Municipal Trial Court branches which moved in the building as early as March 2004, MTC clerk of court Reynaldo Bautista said.

"The new offices will make our courtrooms look dignified," Eje said.

But convenience comes with a price.

"The problem is the narrow parking lot," Eje added.

When the RTC employees and judges finally move in the new hall, the narrow parking space in front may not be enough.

While the court rooms and other offices are bigger than that in the old building, the parking space is much narrower.

Also, since complainants, suspects, policemen, judges and employees from both MTC and RTC will soon be all headed to just one building, the narrow streets leading to the new building may be clogged.

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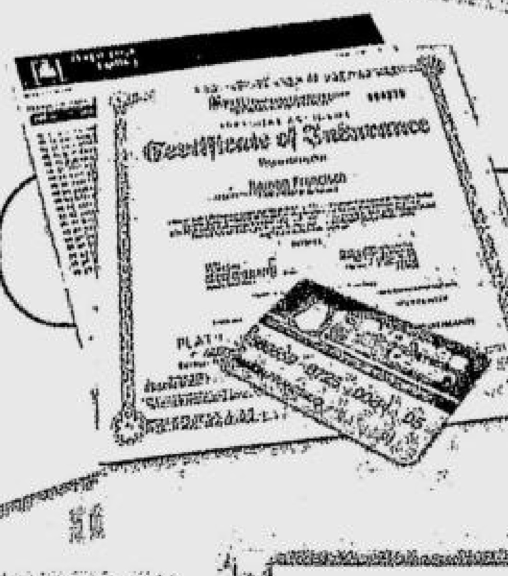

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GOLF: Asian Tour—TCL Classic; 3:30 p.m.; ESPN—The first round tees off in China.
BASKETBALL: US NCAA—ACC Championships; 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. (r); ESPN—Take another look at the title match in one of college basketball's premier conferences.
NBA—Sonics vs Pistons; 8:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports—The defending champs host Seattle.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

WBC sanctions Manny-Erik tiff

THE MANNY Pacquiao-Erik Morales showdown on March 19 will be for the World Boxing Council super featherweight championship.

WBC president Jose Sulaiman announced this yesterday after expressing unequivocal support for his countryman Morales in his clash with the Filipino champion at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

The Mexico-based WBC is the first major boxing body and the second organization to sanction the fight following reports coming out of Las Vegas that fringe International Boxing Association has already declared it as a world championship.

The WBC decision was reportedly made after a telephone conference between Sulaiman and promoter Bob Arum of Top Rank regarding the sanctioning of the bout.

Meanwhile, Morales arrived at the MGM Grand yesterday evening accompanied by his brother Diego on board a Lear jet from Toluca, Mexico, which landed at a private runway just off the Las Vegas strip.

The rest of the members of Team Morales will come in tomorrow, except for manager Fernando Beltran, who had earlier arrived on a commercial jet from Tijuana.

Morales and Pacquiao will be presented at 11:30 a.m. today in their last press conference in halls A and B of the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino with their respective promoters and managers.

Tomorrow, both fighters will be available for satellite interviews with television and radio stations. The official weigh-in takes place at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. It will be open to the public. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

PACQUIAO batters the speedball. AP

Asuncions lead nat'l badminton team for SEAG

By Marc Anthony Reyes

KENNIEVIC Asuncion and sister Kenny, who gave the Philippines a bronze medal in the mixed doubles two years ago, predictably headed the national badminton team chosen yesterday to compete in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

With Kennievic in the men's team are veterans Lloyd Escoses, Rodel Bartolome, Ian Piencenaves, Bogs Amahit, Jaime Junio, Melvin Llanes, Owen Lopez and Wally Fernandez.

Kenny will be joining hands with Irene Chiu, Karyn Velez, Alma Ledesma, Paula Obañana, Racquel Guerrero and Vanessa Tanco in the women's squad.

The team was formed following the recent national qualifying conducted by new head coach Martin Araneta, a former national player who carved a niche coaching private teams like the Ateneo Alumni and the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Araneta replaced Butch Oreta, who resigned due to differences with the Philippine Badminton Association.

Araneta refused to make any prediction although he expressed confidence in the mixed doubles team-up of the Asuncion siblings, who bagged the bronze during the Vietnam SEAG two years ago.

The lineups of players seeing action in the other events will be known later according to Araneta, who said he's staying with the national team only for the duration of the SEAG.

"I have no politics in me, and neither should the players," said Araneta during the team's initial practice session in ClubSixFifty in Libis, Quezon City, where the Nationals played against six world-ranking Indonesian players.

Araneta, 34, also announced that he's inviting other Southeast Asian players to take a shot at the national players so they can get that "mini-SEA Games feeling."

The national mentor also dismissed speculations the country might field Indonesian players who have taken up residency here.

It's Joseph; new swim polls loom

THE PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee yesterday upheld its decision recognizing Mark Joseph as Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (Pasa) president even as it reminded the former Olympian and ousted president Monchito Ilagan to comply with a previous agreement.

"The promulgation named Joseph as the legitimate president," said POC legal counsel Emigdio Tanjuatco Jr. "It was decided by the POC but it doesn't stop there."

The POC bared a document yesterday, both signed by Joseph and Ilagan on Feb. 28, that required Joseph to call an election in six regional associations—National Capital Region, Regions 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9—to define the composition of the Pasa board members.

Once the new regional directors are installed, the Pasa board must meet and elect its president and other officers.

"What happens from there, it's up to them," said POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco. "If they want to install Ilagan back as president, they may do so. The important thing is to solve this situation because it's their athletes' training that's getting affected."

But Ilagan is questioning the document, saying he had signed it for the sake of unity only. Ilagan said that on Mar. 4, he faxed a letter to the POC saying he rejected the agreement.

Ilagan, however, admitted that he got no acknowledgment that the POC received his fax. The POC declared Joseph president on March 7.

Ilagan also has a pending appeal with the international swimming association. *Jasmine W. Payo*

Philsoc beefs up security budget

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE PHILIPPINE Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee will increase its initial P4-million security budget to ensure the safety of all participants and guests of the biennial meet.

"We have to augment it considering the demand in our country's security now," said Philsoc chair Obet Pagdanganan. "In all probability, we will require more than what was budgeted. The P4-million will just be the auxiliary expenses like the police's allowances."

Gen. Rodolfo Tor, director for research and development in Camp Crame, was appointed as the security committee head.

The Philippine National Police will be the lead agency but the Armed Forces will also be mobilized.

The local government units will also be tapped to shoulder the security measures in their area and defray the costs.

The security requirement is a serious concern especially with the opening ceremony set at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park and an estimated crowd of 1 million expected to attend.

Vietnam spent millions for security—out of a P2.8 billion budget—when it hosted the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

In last year's Athens Olympics, the Greek government spent $1.2 billion (about P65.2 billion) for security and mobilized about 70,000 policemen and soldiers to ensure the safety of the athletes and coaches.

The security aspect of the Games came into focus in the wake of the spate of bombings last Feb. 14 and the bloodbath following an uprising by Abu Sayyaf detainees in Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan Tuesday. *With a report from Marc Anthony Reyes*

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Anguib Beach hosts aquathlon Saturday

CAGAYAN Freeport, North Philippines will introduce aquathlon in the area on March 19 to highlight the crystal clear waters and fine sand of Anguib Beach.

The Anguib Aquathlon is expected to attract athletes, adventure racers and endurance enthusiasts wanting to test themselves in the 2.5K run, followed by a 1.5K open ocean swim and capped by a 5K trail run to start and finish at Anguib Beach.

Organized by the Triathlon Association of the Philippines in cooperation with the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority, this new sports tourism event may become a regular event.

"We welcome this opportunity to host this exciting event here in Anguib and we are looking forward to it becoming an annual event," said Ceza CEO and administrator Jose Mari Ponce.

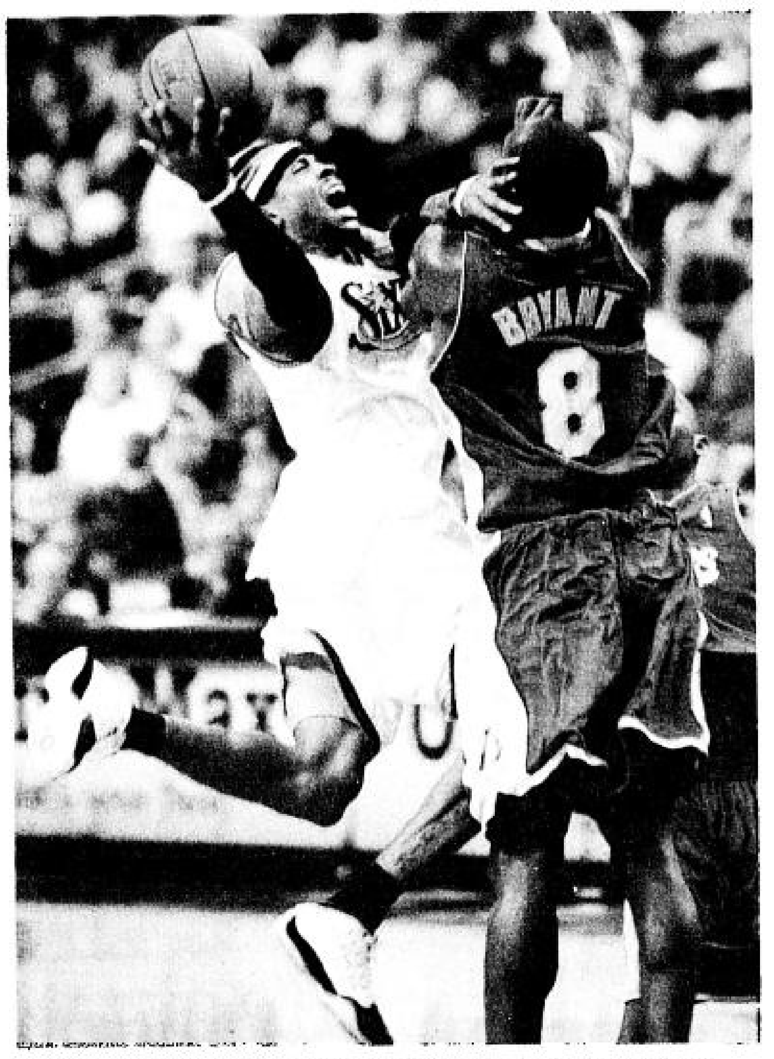
Sponsors are Speedo, PowerBar, the Asian Centre for Insulation Phils., the municipalities of Aparri and Sta. Ana, and the POC-Sports for All Commission while the event host is the provincial government of Cagayan.

Registration forms are available at the TRAP Makati office, unit 1603, Cityland 10 Tower, HV de la Costa near Ayala Avenue, TRAP headquarters, unit 202 Alpha Building, Philsports Complex, in Pasig, Ceza office, seventh floor Westar Tower, Shal Boulevard near Edsa, Pasig and the Cagayan Tourism Office at the Governors Office in Tuguegarao City.

For inquiries, call 09177561403, 09162653109, or e-mail info@triathlon.org.ph

TRIATHLON CHAMPION: Cebu's Gerrie Calinawan crosses the finish line as she rules TRAP's Speedo-National age group triathlon (NAGT) series in Danao City.

Shell creams FedEx for 2nd straight win



PHILADELPHIA'S Allen Iverson (left) challenges the Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant in the 76ers victory Tuesday. *Story on A28* REUTERS

GAME TODAY (*Ormoc Superdome, Ormoc City*)
6:15 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Sta. Lucia Realty

ANTIPOLO CITY—For almost five minutes, Anthony Miller sat on the FedEx bench, clutching his mid-section in pain following a collision underneath the rim.

Miller's temporary absence on the floor was all the Shell Turbochargers needed to cut loose in the second quarter and post a 100-84 win over the Express last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Ynares Center.

As Miller slumped on the bench, Wesley Wilson had a feast in the paint and led a 16-2 run midway in the second that the Turbochargers translated into a 51-35 halftime bubble.

Ronald Tubid had accidentally kicked Miller in the groin after driving off the 6-foot-10 import at the start of the second period.

Miller returned with five minutes and 14 ticks left before halftime, but the Express had already flubbed nine straight attempts and Wilson also had two blocked shots.

Wilson finished with 28 points, hauled down 20 rebounds and had three blocks for the Turbochargers, who registered their second straight win following a disappointing debut against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals.

Wilson also got ample local support as Roger Yap chipped in 14 points while Tony Dela Cruz and Chris Calaguio had 13 each.

"The local players are inspired because of the import," said Shell coach Leo Austria. "As much as possible, he (Wilson) always gets his teammates involved and that's basically the key for us in the past two games."

Miller paced the Express with 27 points and 17 rebounds, Renren Ritualo had 17, including three triples in the first half, but was scoreless in the fourth as FedEx absorbed its second loss after three games.

The Express came within 12 points, 56-68, behind Gary David and Bruce Dacia, but couldn't stop the Turbochargers' hot shooting and fastbreak plays.

"We're a team which takes a lot of shots from the field but we always ended up with an inferior field-goal percentage," said Austria.

"After a careful analysis of our shooting the past conference, we are now putting emphasis on the ratio of the shots that went in against the attempts made," added Austria.

Meanwhile, an elite panel will select the personalities set to compose the first ever Philippine Basketball Association Hall of Fame.

League commissioner Noli Eala, his predecessor Jun Bernardino and PBA chairperson Emmanuel Encarnado are at the helm of the 25-man group which forms the selection and honors committees.

The scores:

First game

SHELL 100—Wilson 28, Yap 14, Dela Cruz 13, Calagulo 13, Tubid 9, Mamaril 8, Alvarez 7, Cruz 4, Sta. Maria 4, Sharma 0, Sotto 0, Jackson 0.

FEDEX 84—Miller 27, Ritualo 17, Ferriols 12, David 10, Billones 8, Dacia 4, Pingris' 4, Bravo 2, De Ocampo 0, Gonzales 0, Victolero 0, Codiñera 0, Arboleda 0.

Quarters: 23-26, 51-35, 73-60, 100-84

Cardona picks Harbour Center

IT'S going to be Harbour Center for La Salle ace Mac Cardona, who will be joining hands with Ateneo stars when the new kid on the Philippine Basketball League block tries to make an impact in the Unity Cup starting April 2.

Cardona picked Harbour Center, which had earlier tapped former Ateneo mainstays LA Tenorio, Larry Fonacier, Paulo Bugia and Magnum Membrere, over Welcoat Paints in his last stint as an amateur before joining the PBA rookie draft in August.

Coached by Tonichi Yturri with Derrick Pumaren as team consultant, Harbour Centre also boasts NCAA superstar Gabby Espinas, Jerwin Gaco, Robert Sanz, Ray Mendoza, Jenkins Mesina, Jason Castro, Lou Gatumbato and Romel Dizon. Espinas helped Philippine Christian University win the 2004 NCAA title, in the process becoming the first league player to emerge MVP and Rookie of the Year.

Marc Anthony Reyes

CARDONA: Joins Ateneo stars.

Baguio Ladies golf blasts off

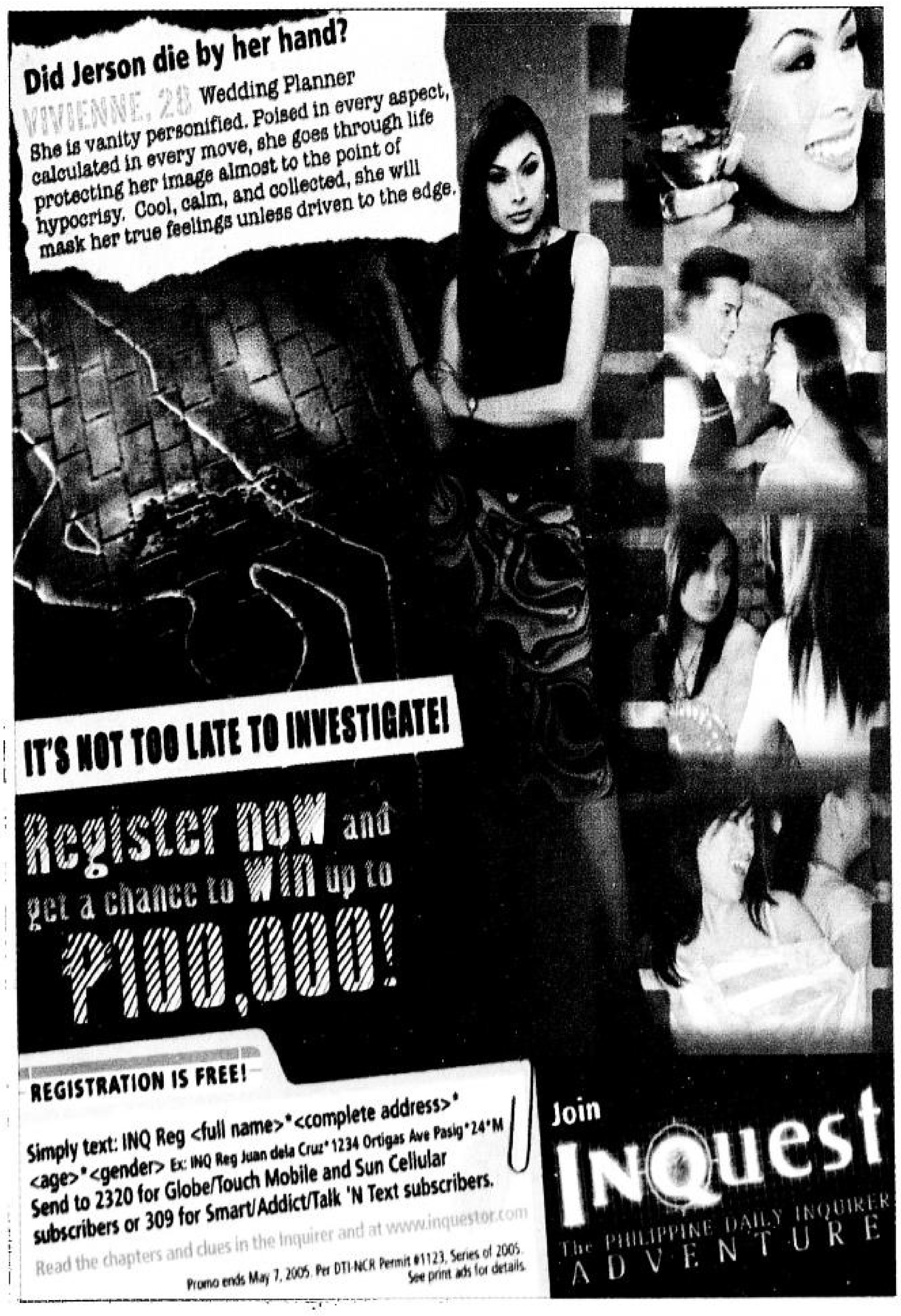
THE SECOND Ladies Golf Tournament starts today at the par-69 Camp John Hay golf course.

The second round will be played at the up-and-down, short but tricky, par 61- Baguio Country Club (BCC) fairway. And back at CJH for the third and final round.

Manila Southwoods and Camp John Hay, the defending titlists in the Sunflower (Group I) Fil and Am divisions, respectively, lead the entries.

Also vying for honors are teams from Sta. Elena GC, Riviera Golf and Contry Club, Orchard Golf and Country Club, Golf Divas, Valley GC, Warbird, Ernest Maude International Ltd., hosts BCC and CJH.

Jayvie Agojo, the reigning Philippine Ladies Open titlist, leads the 77 bets.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Japan stranglehold

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THERE WERE a lot of interesting reactions to my column about the "Asian boxing Mafia" (13/05/05). Mostly, they agreed that Japan seems to have a stranglehold of big fights involving Asians, mostly Filipinos and Thais.

One reader went one step farther: Japanese champions don't get out of their country anymore to defend their crowns.

"Could it be that a defense abroad by a Japanese champion would not be in accordance with a Japanese promoter's business policy, which is to control promotions and limit them only to Japan's territories to ensure that money derived from the fights are confined to Japanese soil?"

I believe so.

Look, twice Gerry Peñalosa traveled to Japan to challenge for the world crown, first in Tokyo and then in Yokohama.

On both fights, Peñalosa lost to Tokuyama on points.

On both fights, Peñalosa was victim of sloppy officiating.

In dismay, Peñalosa, one of our finest boxers ever to don a championship belt, retired.

But Peñalosa is back and, through the kindness of his former manager, Rudy Salud, the former world flyweight champion is now in Florida training since Feb. 8, in the company of world-class fighter Z Gorres.

What a man, this Rudy Salud. He's not Peñalosa's manager anymore and yet, he keeps on helping the boxer.

May I nominate him as godfather of professional boxing, if there's such a position in sports in this troubled nation of ours?

Anyway, the reader went on to say: "It's about time that Japan's stranglehold of fights in Asia is exposed. We are all behind you in this crusade."

Not only are big fights controlled by the Japanese, they also dip their hands into small bouts.

Notice the exodus of Filipino boxers to Japan.

The lure of the yen has brought our own pugilists to the Land of the Rising Sun—even if, to many of them, a bout there was only a passport for them to go TNT after the fight.

I've heard of so many Filipino fighters in Japan forced to embrace a life of inhuman conditions—either that they suffered vicious knockouts due mainly to their inexperience and then left to fend for their own at hospitals, or pushed to do menial jobs after one fight just to escape the squalor.prevalent in Philippine conditions.

Our own government, through the Games and Amusements Board, is partly to blame for this.

As I said here a while back, Manny Pacquiao is to earn $1.750 million in his fight against Erik Morales on Sunday, March 20, in Las Vegas. Manny has set the trend: Skip Japan, go to America.

In Japan, the biggest purse given to a foreign fighter is $350,000, when the truth is, Japanese promoters can also raise purses to million-dollar levels if they want to.

That is so because of the Mafia-style system in Japan, which gives puny purses to foreign fighters and allows the syndicate to pocket the main bulk of earnings of every fight.

Oh, well, it's been that way since the Nineties, I guess, and it's got to end now, somehow.

Incidentally, Hermie Rivera, the manager of two-time world champion Luisito Espinosa, said he would not predict the winner in the Pacquiao-Morales fight.

Said Hermie in his letter to me: "I wouldn't want to pick a winner in this one. Not that I'm unprepared to choose the likely victor. It's just that I find it risky. Remember Marco Antonio Barrera? Besides, the Gensan Marvel hasn't lost a fight since he beat sensationally as a first replacement-Lehlo Ledwaba. It boils down really on how one looks at it. Which is why the entire boxing world is still split on how this one will turn out. I only hope the eventual winner will not destroy his victim beyond recovery."

I believe Morales can't destroy Pacquiao.

Only Pacquiao, with his bull-strong punch, is capable of destroying an opponent. And that includes Morales.

Subic International Center hosts tennis

THE SUBIC Bay International Tennis Center opens its tennis courts to a full schedule of summer activities. The world-class center will host the popular Tennis and Sports Camps, a four-day and three nights residential camp starting on March 23 for boys and girls ages 7 to 18 year olds. The camp is organized by Sports Development Asia led by former grand slammer Virgilio 'Beeyong' Sison and USPTA pro George Zahorsky. The program is in line with the Subic Bay Freeport Zone's sports tourism program to turn Subic into multiple-activity tourist destination. For details, call Subic Bay International Tennis Center 047-252-2885 and 86 or e-mail info@subicbaytennis.com.

P5-MILLION POT

Country Club Invt'l starts

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, Laguna—Antonio Lascuña knows that the Country Club Invitational can be unkind to its defending champion.

With the winds howling hard the past week and with the exclusive layout reduced to a tougher par-70, Lascuña got the benefit of an early start and will lead off the crack field in the P5 million event serving as the kickoff leg of the local pro season.

The 32-year-old former caddy at Apo Golf in Davao will be shooting to win this rich event for the second straight year, and an 8 a.m. tee-off could mean ideal playing conditions that could work to his advantage.

Cassius Casas found that out the hard way last year when he miserably missed the cut. He now eyes redemption, and has actually given himself a good chance of winning again.

"I don't think that it will happen again," Casas told the INQUIRER in Filipino, referring to an 85 and an 89 that made him finish at the tailend of the field as the defending champion last year.

"I was not focused (last year), and I am looking forward to playing in the final flight this Sunday," added Casas, who tees off in the third flight together with Roger Cabajar, Rodolfo Cuello and Chu-Chu Martinez.

The cream of the country's professional crop is vying for the P1.1 million champion's purse.

Only the revered Frankie Minoza and Angelo Que are out, with Que, runner-up to Lascuña last year, set to play in a simultaneous Asian Tour event in China.

The Country Club layout now boasts tougher nines of 35-35 with hole Nos. 8 and 10, par-5s for members, made into long par-4s.

Lascuna's winning score was four-under 276 last year, and a repeat of that, if windy conditions become prevalent the rest of the week, could give one the inside track at the championship.

Former Philippine Open champions Gerald Rosales and Robert Pactolerin are also entered as well as amateurs Michael Bibat, Jay Bayron, Tonlits Asistio, Jun Bernis, Artemio Murakami and Juvic Pagunsan.

Meanwhile, Jherome Delariarte and partner Jason Lim won the pro-am after combining for a nine-under 61 yesterday. The duo nipped the Pactolerin-Agapito Capistrano tandem by one.

LPGA STAR: Jennifer Rosales of the Philippines poses for a portrait prior to the start of the Safeway International at Superstition Mountain Golf and Country Club Tuesday in Superstition Mountain, Arizona. AFP

SPORTSWATCH

Candon City chess starts March 18

THE 2005 Candon City Chess Championship gets underway on March 18-20 at the KEA Mall & Fun Center in San Nicolas, Candon City, Ilocos Sur. The tournament sponsored by 2nd district of Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson aims to promote chess in the countryside. Dubbed the Congressman Singson Cup, the tournament organized by the 2005 Candon City Fiesta Executive Committee is divided into the Open and 15-Under divisions.

For inquiries, contact Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlungsod Jerry Malamion at 0916-4872440 or (077) 7426674 or Willie Abalos at 0921-6219898. ***NM Marlon Bernardino***

Champions of the Future Series

THE TUASON Racing School's Champions of the Future Series will start on Sunday at the Kart Trak in Boomland along Roxas Boulevard. The kids karting series, which is sponsored by TRS, Bingo Bonanza, Smart Kid, Petron, Oakley, Manila Speedzone, Brothers Burger, Philippine International Karting Association (Pika) and Asian Formula Three Corp. (AF3) , is the culmination of a search began early this year by the TRS for potential racing champions, aged 8 to 13 years old. The youngsters who earned a scholarship with the TRS are Renz William Pazcoguin, Bobby Domingo, Amando Antonio Pasolo Gonzales, Andres Saldaña, Javier Ynaki Miguel Toledo, Angeles Julia Andolong, Jash Nicole Alexis Jacinto and Franco Reyes. They underwent a comprehensive training program under two-time Karter of the Year and Formula 3 driver JP Tuason.

Daytime 3-Cock Derby at Sta. Ana

ABOUT 80 small-time cockers and breeders will aim for the guaranteed prize of P400,000 in the Daytime 3-Cock Derby on March 31 at Sta. Ana Cockpit (AP Reyes Avenue, Makati City). Entry fee is P5,500. With more than 120 fights lined up, the event will start at noon. Hosts of the event are Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola of Mandaluyong. Paliza and Badiola recently hosted the 596 entry PSG Fastest Kill Challenge. The top five winners were Noel Socoral and Manuel Romero of Pasig (King Michael, 11.68 seconds); Zaldy Namoro (Zaldy II, 11.99); Elmo Castillo (Bombay, 12.22); Herman Moral (JCF, 12.82) and Walter Joeber of Laguna (Waljoe, 13.42). For inquiries, call 898-3474 and 8983475 or 0918-9251121 and 0921-5191962.

Filcoba 5th leg set Saturday

THE FIFTH leg of Filipino Cockers and Breeders Association (Filcoba) 4-Cock Derby series is set on Saturday with more than 30 topnotch cockers and breeders seeing action. Hosts of the event are Dado Mitra of Batangas, Mauro Prieto of Palawan and Darwin Torres of Bulacan. At stake is a cash prize of P300,000 with an entry fee of P7,700. Submission of entries will be tomorrow, starting 1 p.m. Interested parties may call 8332275, 8331638 and 8529812. Three entries topped the fourth Filcoba cockfest last March 12: Wild na Wild of Philip Chionglan and Edmund Yasay, Old Time Nevada of Tos Reyes and Black Alabat of Benny Lado. Meanwhile, about 60 entries are expected in the Cash Premyo 3-Cock Derby on Monday with Mario Gujelde, Abraham Bernales and Tiling Capitan as hosts.

NATIONAL Basketball Conference secretary general Tito Palma (left) and Parañaque vice mayor Anjo Yllana seal the Parañaque Jets entry to the NBC national championship which starts April 15 in Baguio and Cagayan de Oro City.

Ilocano teener snares gold in US Open taekwondo tilt

CINCO: 16-year-old blackbelter

A YOUNG blackbelter from Pinili, Ilocos Norte, named Julius Cinco made waves in the US Open taekwondo championships recently by winning the Philippines' lone gold medal at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Fighting in the finweight class (up to 99 pounds), the 16-year-old Cinco crushed American Jensen Ishida with a back leg 45 attack and a bullet roundhouse combination to win, 6-2, in the finals.

RP team head coach Ricky Santiago Jr. described Cinco's showing in his first ever international stint as "fantastic." "He was focused in all his bouts," said Santiago.

Cinco, who was sponsored by Ilocos Norte sports consultant Michael Keon, was introduced to taekwondo by his late teacher, Lilia Bautista, at Pinili National High four years ago and got his blackbelt under the tutelage of Roger Valdez.

A gold medalist in the recent Carlos Palanca Jr. all blackbelt tournament, Cinco swept past two other Americans in the quarters and semifinals. Three other Filipinos—Czarina Cabuco of Laguna, John Ferdinand Bahoy of Las Piñas and Kimberly Mae Menchavez—won a medal each.

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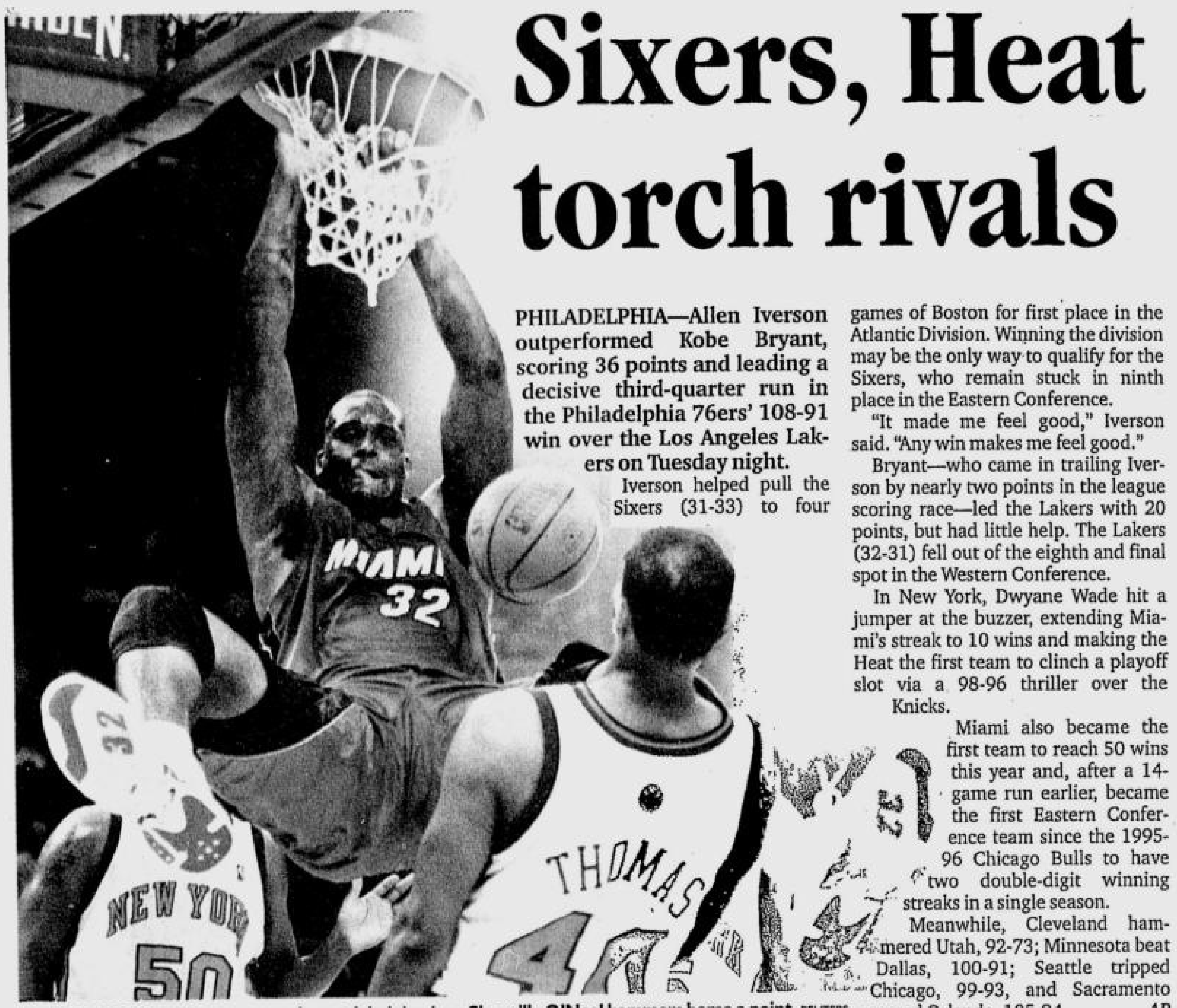
Sixers, Heat torch rivals



NEW YORK'S Kurt Thomas can only watch helplessly as Shaquille O'Neal hammers home a point. REUTERS

PHILADELPHIA—Allen Iverson outperformed Kobe Bryant, scoring 36 points and leading a decisive third-quarter run in the Philadelphia 76ers' 108-91 win over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

Iverson helped pull the Sixers (31-33) to four games of Boston for first place in the Atlantic Division. Winning the division may be the only way to qualify for the Sixers, who remain stuck in ninth place in the Eastern Conference.

"It made me feel good," Iverson said. "Any win makes me feel good."

Bryant—who came in trailing Iverson by nearly two points in the league scoring race—led the Lakers with 20 points, but had little help. The Lakers (32-31) fell out of the eighth and final spot in the Western Conference.

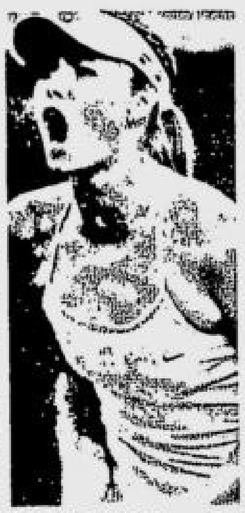
In New York, Dwyane Wade hit a jumper at the buzzer, extending Miami's streak to 10 wins and making the Heat the first team to clinch a playoff slot via a 98-96 thriller over the Knicks.

Miami also became the first team to reach 50 wins this year and, after a 14-game run earlier, became the first Eastern Conference team since the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls to have two double-digit winning streaks in a single season.

Meanwhile, Cleveland hammered Utah, 92-73; Minnesota beat Dallas, 100-91; Seattle tripped Chicago, 99-93, and Sacramento zapped Orlando, 105-94. *AP*

EXPANSION TEAM: National Basketball Conference secretary general Tito Palma (left) welcomes Valencia City mayor Jose Galario and city engineer Alfredo Guzman (right) to the league. The other new NBC entry, Parañaque City, has slated its tryouts today and tomorrow from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Pearl Gym on Quirino Avenue and Tambo, Parañaque City.

Federer makes waves in Pacific



SHARAPOVA AP

INDIAN WELLS, California—World No. 1 Roger Federer, winning for the 22nd time in 23 matches this year, defeated Gilles Muller of Luxembourg, 6-3, 6-2, to move into the fourth round Tuesday in the Pacific Life Open.

Lleyton Hewitt had a slightly more difficult time, beating Frenchman Michael Llodra, 6-2, 7-6 (3).

Taylor Dent upset Australian Open champion Marat Safin, 7-5, 6-4, in their evening match.

Safin, a 25-year-old player from Moscow, was extremely frustrated.

"Just the worst match I ever played probably in my career," he said. "I didn't feel so bad on the court ever in my life. No matter what I would do, it just would not go my way.

"It's a terrible feeling."

On the women's side, Lindsay Davenport advanced to the quarterfinals with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Viktoriya Kutuzova.

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova survived a close call against Fabiola Zuluaga, pulling out a 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 win.

Former No. 1 Kim Clijsters continued her comeback from a wrist injury by defeating Evgenia Linetskaya, 6-2, 6-1, in their fourth-round match. No. 5 Elena Dementieva advanced with a 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory over Tatiana Golovin.

Federer, the men's defending champion, said he took his usual approach to the match against Muller—believing it was going to be a tough one.

"When I go into a match, that's what I think about, even though maybe I'm the big favorite and my opponent hasn't played many of the big matches on big courts around the world," he said. *AP*

8 KEYS TO YOUR DIFFERENT INTERESTS

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25 PM)	Gatekeepers (5:10 PM)	Gundam Seed (5:35 PM)	The Road To Stardom	TV Patrol		Spirits	Krystala	Hiram	Save The Last Dance	Til Death Do Us Part	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
NBN		Taiwan/ Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop			Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Sinulog Festival					
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA			PBA		Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Inq TV	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Joyride	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Knock Out	Tyler Hungry Heart	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin		Full House	Stairway To Heaven	Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberrys	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		Mosconi Cup					IBC News Tonite		
Solar		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Avengers	Stargate SG1		Thunder Box		JAG		Shaolin The Legend Continues			
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Good Morning Miami	What I Like About You	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News		Will & Grace	JKX	Ed		Girls Behaving Badly	Simple Life 2	Tonight Show With Jay Leno			
Cinema One		Matalino Man Ang Matsing				Antipolo Massacre				Talahib At Rosas 2				Dama: Ang Pagbabalik				Antonia Part 3	
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Batman Beyond	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	America's Next Top Model			Miss Match		News Central	Oprah		Yes Dear
AXN		The Contender		Fear Factor		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Samurai X	Samurai X	Andromeda (Season III)		Canon AXN Xtreme	Now See This	Lost		Anatomy			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol	Growing Up Gotti	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol	Growing Up Gotti	The Chronicle News From The Edge		Outback Jack		Friends	American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Frontlines Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell		Evolution		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wow		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Frontlines Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell	
Solar Sports	Copenhagen Masters MxdD Final		KOTV Classics Eps 12 & 13	GWS ep 8-2005	Sounds of the Finals		2005 All England Badminton Finals						NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Seattle @ Detroit					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fixt	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds						
HBO	Exquisite Tenderness			The Guys (4:15 PM)			Club Paradise (5:45 PM)				Dead Calm (7:25 PM)			Identity			Last Man Standing	Air Rage (10:50PM)	
Star Movies	What Planet Are You From?			Critical Assembly			FIX			Moonstruck (7:15 PM)				The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen					
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Static Shock	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Shaman King	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Dexter's Laboratory	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	The Superfriends	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN			Asian Tour: TCL Classic day1				Motorsport Asia	Arc Basketball Tour Washington, DC USA (C'ships)				Sportscenter Asia	2004 Women's Trick Shot Magic CT USA		Big 12 Basketball Tour Kansas, MO USA (C'ships)				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	Princess of Thieves			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	George Of The Jungle 2	
Cinemax			East Of Eden				Waterland			The Skulls II (7:15 PM)				Above Suspicion			The Bourne Identity		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	I Do But I Don't				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Judging Amy		Strong Medicine		Back When We Were Grown Ups			Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye (10:35PM)		Judging Amy (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Extreme Engineering		Ultimate Cars	Building The Ultimate	Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Power Zone	
Sports Plus	SBC Classics Day3	Italia Serie A				PAL Interclub Golf		Raceworld		Inside the PGA	You've Got to See This	Italia Serie A				Nascar UAW-Daimler Chrysler 400 L.A.			
EWTN	A Christian Pilgrimage To Jordan	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Suffering Church	Angel Force	Children's Rosary	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	The Spirit Of Catholic Leadership	Saints: A Closer Look	EWTN Gallery	EWTN Live With Father Mitch Pacwa		Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Council Of Faith	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	The Journey Home	

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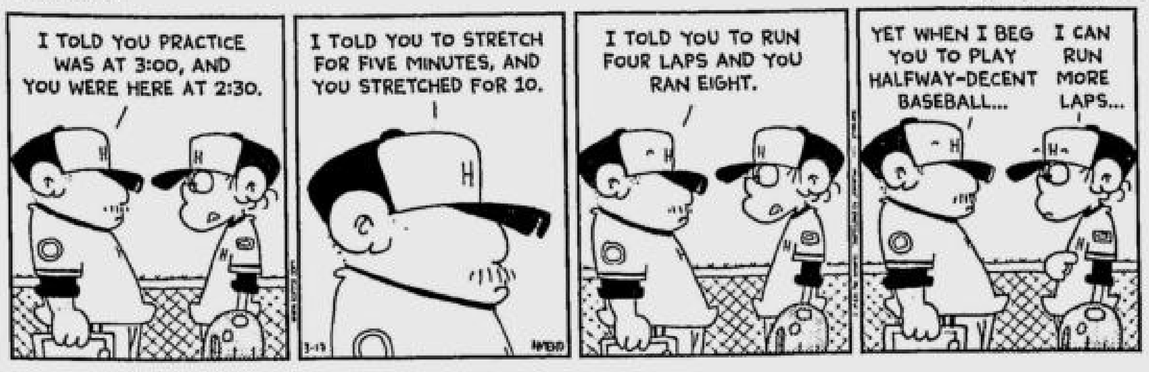
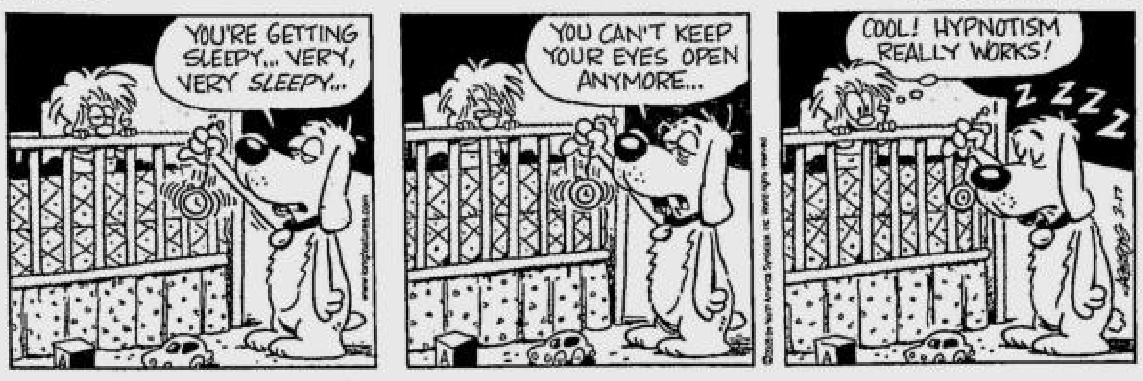
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


I TOLD YOU PRACTICE WAS AT 3:00, AND YOU WERE HERE AT 2:30.
I TOLD YOU TO STRETCH FOR FIVE MINUTES, AND YOU STRETCHED FOR 10.
I TOLD YOU TO RUN FOUR LAPS AND YOU RAN EIGHT.
YET WHEN I BEG YOU TO PLAY HALFWAY-DECENT BASEBALL...
I CAN RUN MORE LAPS...

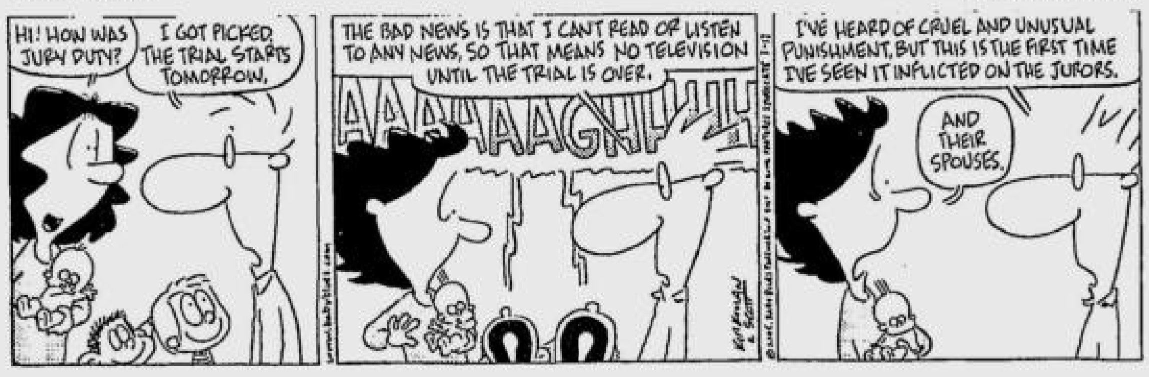
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


YOU'RE GETTING SLEEPY... VERY, VERY SLEEPY...
YOU CAN'T KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN ANYMORE...
COOL! HYPNOTISM REALLY WORKS!
Z Z Z Z

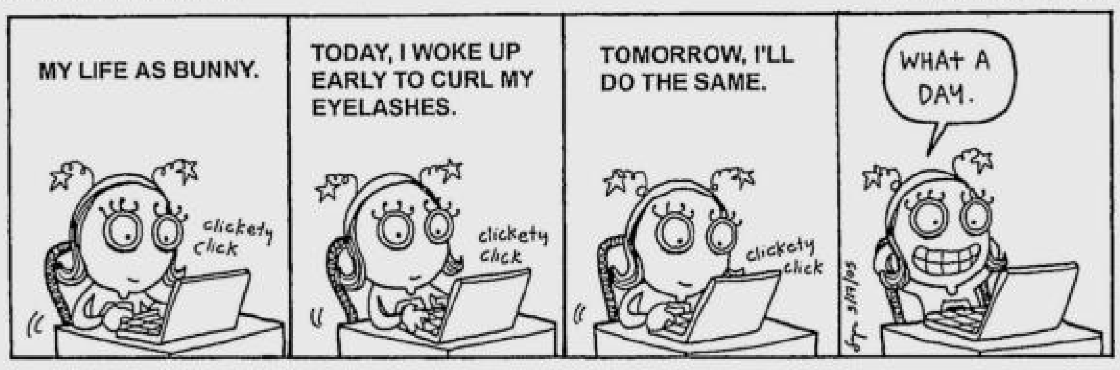
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HI! HOW WAS JURY DUTY?
I GOT PICKED. THE TRIAL STARTS TOMORROW.
THE BAD NEWS IS THAT I CAN'T READ OR LISTEN TO ANY NEWS, SO THAT MEANS NO TELEVISION UNTIL THE TRIAL IS OVER.
AAAAAAAGHHHH
I'VE HEARD OF CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN IT INFLICTED ON THE JURORS.
AND THEIR SPOUSES.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


MY LIFE AS BUNNY.
TODAY, I WOKE UP EARLY TO CURL MY EYELASHES.
TOMORROW, I'LL DO THE SAME.
WHAT A DAY.
clickety click
clickety click
clickety click

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're so expressive, and you have a grace about you. It just comes naturally. It's how you talk and how you move. Because you are excited about life, and in particular, enthused about the arts and many beautiful things, others are attracted to you. You like meaningful causes. In the year ahead, you will wrap up a major cycle.
Birthdate of: Gary Sinise, actor; Kurt Russell, actor; Nat "King" Cole, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You can't shake off a certain idea today. You're clinging to a belief (religious or political). This belief gives you courage in your own future.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might not be happy sharing something today with someone. You identify strongly with what you own. You feel intensely about things. (Don't do anything you don't want to do.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): An important relationship might break up today. Issues are intense in a black-and-white way; there is no room for compromise. (But you know that there's always room for compromise, right?)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You want to take unusual ideas, perhaps ideas that are done in another country or another culture, and apply them to your life or your job. You think it will improve things. (And it might.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You feel very passionate today. Romantic relationships are intense and a bit over the top. In fact, you feel passionate about everything today!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): In some ways, today is the deciding point in an important partnership. You might want to open the doors to a cozier future, or in turn, you might want to close them.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have wonderful ideas about how to create reform and make improvements in your job. In fact, some of your ideas will actually improve your health as well. Good thinking!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might feel powerfully drawn to someone today. Relationships can be passionate. Make sure you're not hanging on to someone out of insecurity. (Don't smother others.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're trying to clarify something in an important family relationship today. You want others to know what your true needs are. This is good and wise. (Be polite and reasonable.)

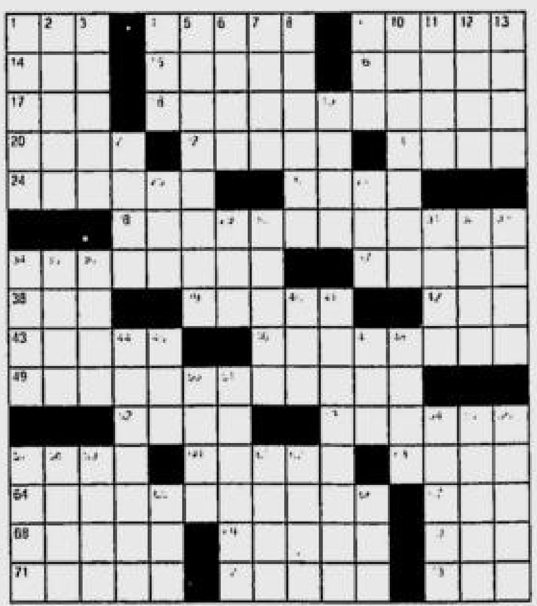
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Conversations with relatives and siblings are definitely memorable today. You want to get right down to the nitty gritty and express how you feel!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You feel strongly about buying something today. You feel you must have it. If you can afford it, get it.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today fair Venus is in your sign, making an aspect to powerful Pluto. All conversations with bosses or authority figures will be significant. Avoid doing anything rash.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Ford or Dodge
4 Parade vehicle
9 Chris of tennis
14 Wrath
15 Deciduous conifer
16 Bannister, e.g.
17 Chest bone
18 Tournament uncertainty
20 Average grades
22 Possessive pronoun
23 Skates
24 Drawing power
26 Evening in Torino
28 Tournament time
34 King novel
37 Lost
38 College cheer
39 Gilbert and Teasdale
42 Arista
43 Event site
46 Acting as toastmaster
49 Tournament winner
52 Vegetarian taboo
53 Puzzle
57 Sicilian mount
60 Dude from Dubuque
63 Head-to-head contest
64 Tournament, slangily
67 Not well
68 String quartet member
69 Supped
70 Poetic meadow
71 __ of Troy
72 Cache of cash
73 Cub Scouts' unit



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
3/17/05

DOWN
1 Approximately
2 Sharon of Israel
3 Dissident
4 Spinoff of "Alice"
5 Portable lights
6 Correct: pref.
7 Longing
8 Belief in God
9 Aussie bird
10 Lively
11 Exile isle
12 Depend
13 Most of Paris?
19 La __ Tar Pits
21 Japanese wrestling
25 St. Louis pro
27 Vitamin fig.
29 Natl. interest watchdog
30 Sheik's women
31 Actor Morales
32 Stitched
33 Caroled
34 Turkey's neighbor
35 DEA agent
36 Queens stadium
40 Elec. unit
41 Systematized disciplines
44 Identifiable
45 Unreturnable serve
47 Long, long time
48 Writer Bagnold
50 Reagan's Alexander
51 In conflict
54 Trade group
55 Dust-up
56 EAP part
57 Write on metal
58 Friend's pronoun
59 Foster film
61 Stand by
62 Dancer Pavlova
65 Saturn model
66 Old English letter

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

C	R	A	M	■	F	L	A	G	■	P	H	O	T	O
R	E	B	A	■	R	E	D	O	■	R	E	S	I	N
A	P	E	H	■	I	D	E	A	■	E	A	S	E	L
B	O	T	T	L	E	A	N	D	S	A	L	A	R	Y
■	■	■	Y	E	N	■	■	S	E	C	■	■	■	■
A	P	B	■	F	O	D	A	■	T	H	A	M	E	S
C	L	E	A	■	L	E	N	A	■	E	L	E	N	A
C	A	G	N	E	Y	A	N	D	F	R	I	D	A	Y
R	I	O	T	S	■	F	A	I	R	■	T	A	T	S
A	N	T	I	C	S	■	O	N	E	L	■	L	E	O
■	■	■	■	A	U	K	■	■	U	R	N	■	■	■
S	T	A	N	L	E	Y	A	N	D	R	Y	D	E	H
H	O	S	E	A	■	L	I	I	I	■	L	U	R	E
A	L	E	R	T	■	E	D	N	A	■	O	D	I	N
G	L	A	D	E	■	S	E	E	N	■	N	E	N	E

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3/17/05

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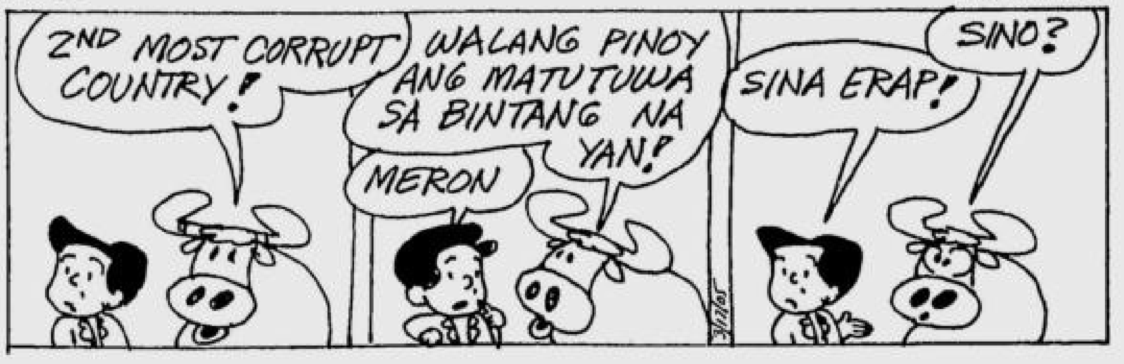
An engine that is poorly tuned can use up to 50% more fuel and release 50% more pollution than a properly maintained vehicle.

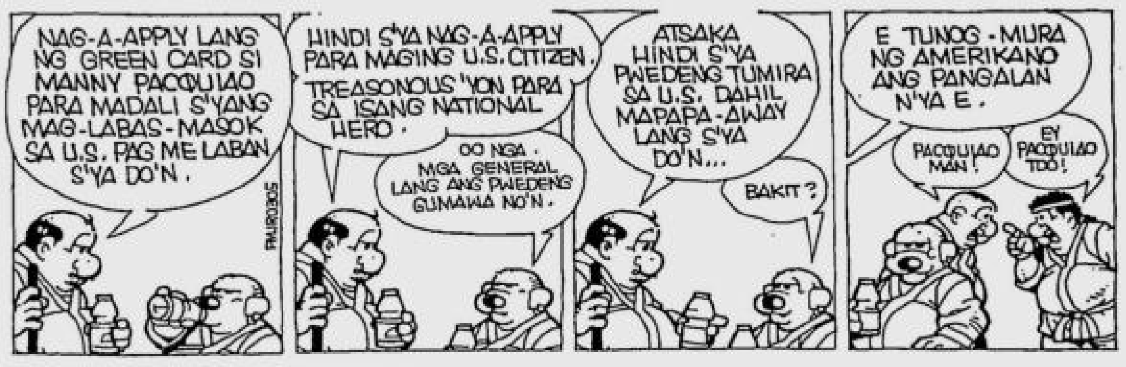
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


2ND MOST CORRUPT COUNTRY!
WALANG PINOY ANG MATUTUWA SA BINTANG NA YAN!
MERON
SINA ERAP!
SINO?

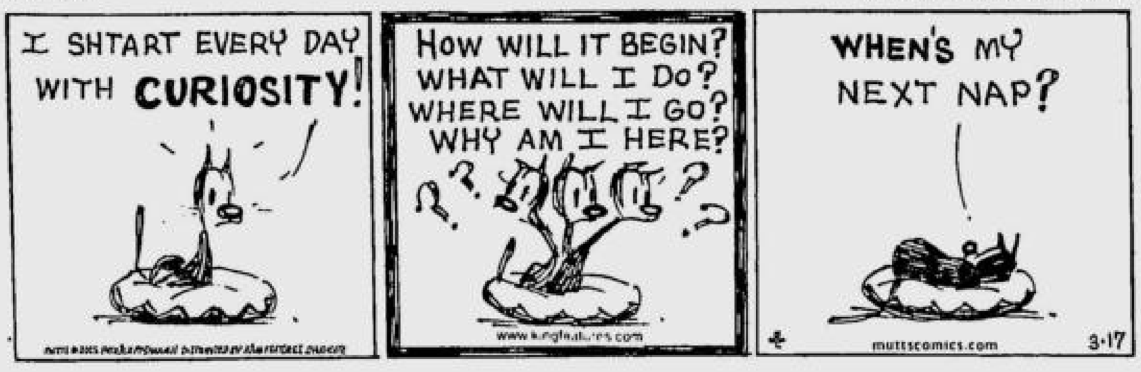
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NAG-A-APPLY LANG NG GREEN CARD SI MANNY PACQUIAO PARA MADALI S'YANG MAG-LABAS-MASOK SA U.S. PAG ME LABAN S'YA DO'N.
HINDI S'YA NAG-A-APPLY PARA MAGING U.S. CITIZEN. TREASONOUS 'YON PARA SA ISANG NATIONAL HERO.
OO NGA. MGA GENERAL LANG ANG PWEDENG GUMAWA NO'N.
ATSAKA HINDI S'YA PWEDENG TUMIRA SA U.S. DAHIL MAPAPA-AWAY LANG S'YA DO'N...
BAKIT?
E TUNOG-MURA NG AMERIKANO ANG PANGALAN N'YA E.
PACQUIAO MAN!
EY PACQUIAO TOO!

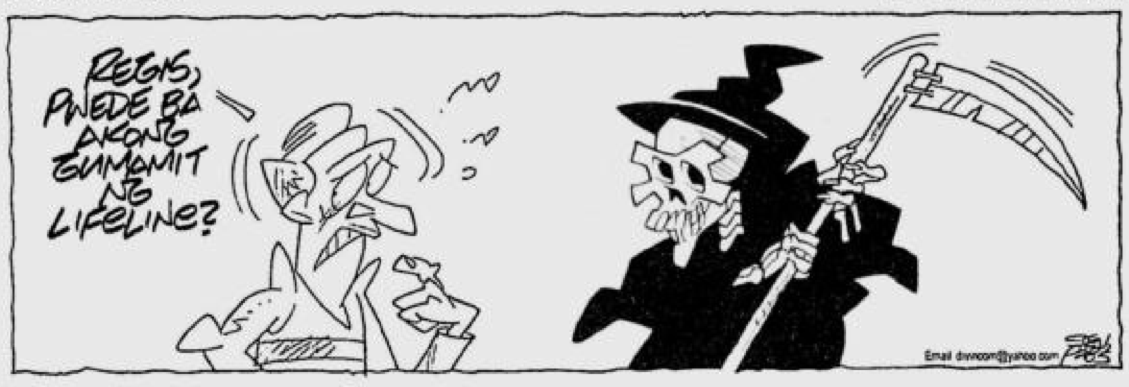
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I SHTART EVERY DAY WITH CURIOSITY!
HOW WILL IT BEGIN? WHAT WILL I DO? WHERE WILL I GO? WHY AM I HERE?
WHEN'S MY NEXT NAP?
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
3·17

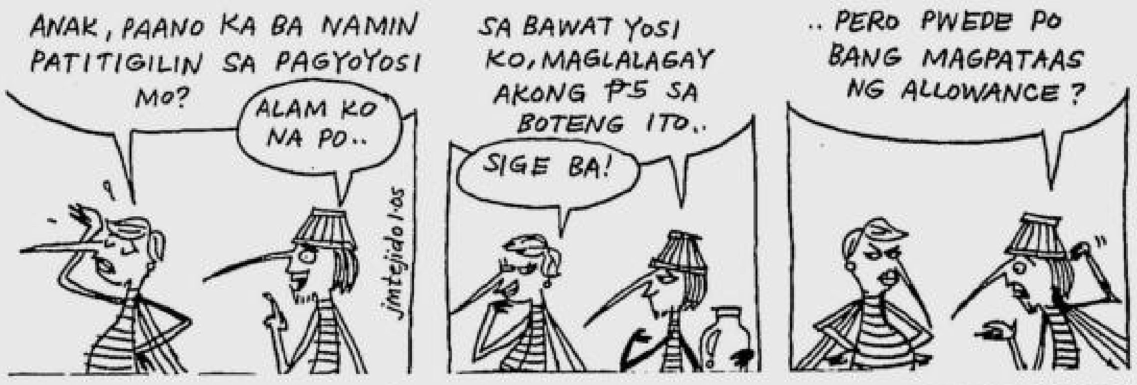
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


REGIS, PWEDE BA AKONG GUMAMIT NG LIFELINE?
Email divincom@yahoo.com

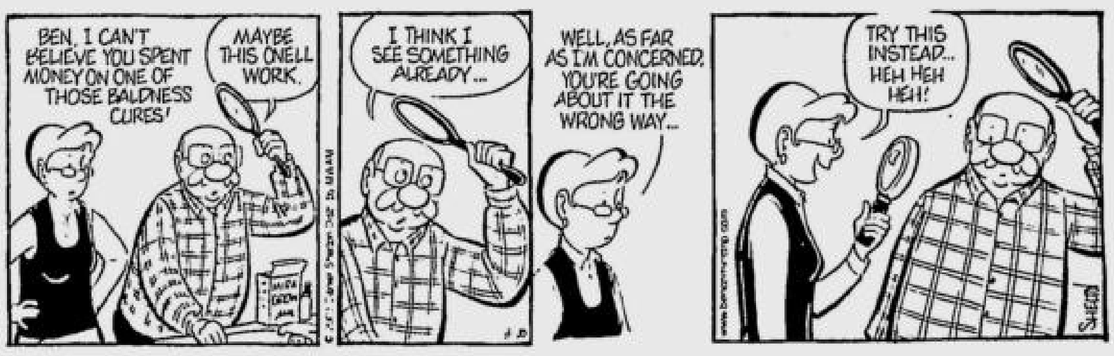
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANAK, PAANO KA BA NAMIN PATITIGILIN SA PAGYOYOSI MO?
ALAM KO NA PO..
SA BAWAT YOSI KO, MAGLALAGAY AKONG P5 SA BOTENG ITO..
SIGE BA!
.. PERO PWEDE PO BANG MAGPATAAS NG ALLOWANCE?
jmtejido 1·05

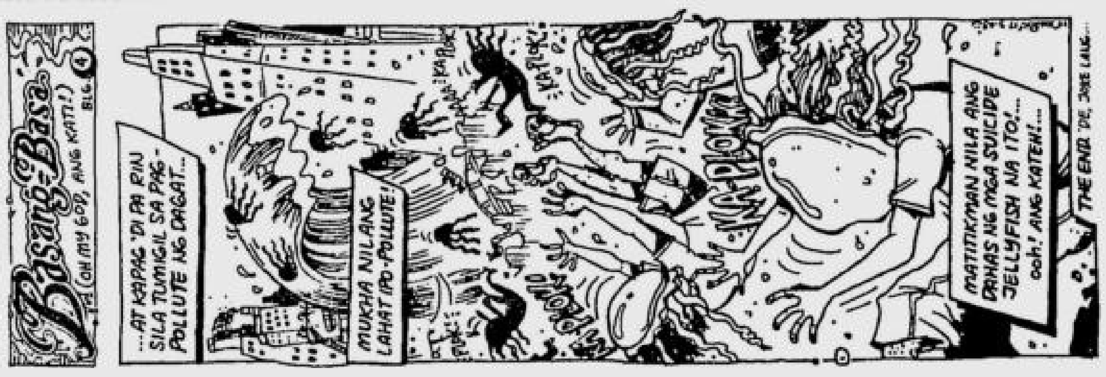
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


BEN, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU SPENT MONEY ON ONE OF THOSE BALDNESS CURES!
MAYBE THIS ONE'LL WORK.
I THINK I SEE SOMETHING ALREADY...
WELL, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE GOING ABOUT IT THE WRONG WAY...
TRY THIS INSTEAD... HEH HEH HEH!

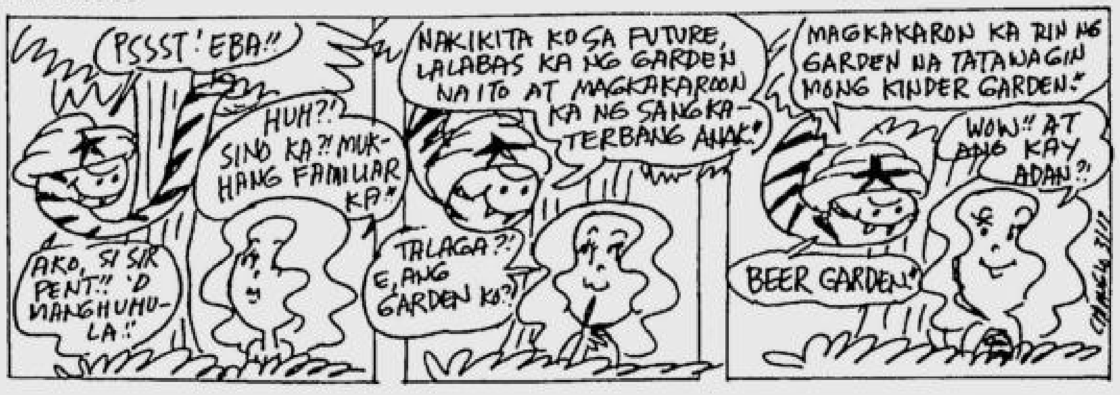
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Basang-Basa (OH MY GOD, ANG KATI!) BLG. 4
...AT KAPAG 'DI PA RIN SILA TUMIGIL SA PAG-POLLUTE NG DAGAT...
MUKHA NILANG LAHAT IPO-POLLUTE!
MATITIKMAN NILA ANG DAHAS NG MGA SUICIDE JELLYFISH NA ITO!... OOH! ANG KATEH!...
THE END 'DE, JOKE LANG...

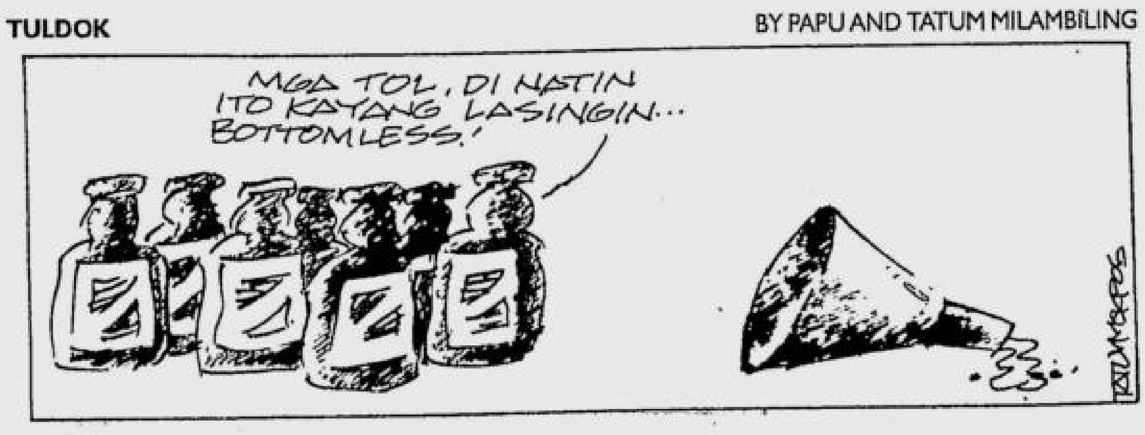
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PSSST! EBA!!
HUH?! SINO KA?! MUKHANG FAMILIAR KA?!
AKO, SI SIR PENT!! 'D MANGHUHULA!!
NAKIKITA KO SA FUTURE, LALABAS KA NG GARDEN NA ITO AT MAGKAKAROON KA NG SANGKATERBANG ANAK!
TALAGA?! E, ANG GARDEN KO?!
MAGKAKARON KA RIN NG GARDEN NA TATAWAGIN MONG KINDER GARDEN!
WOW!! AT ANG KAY ADAN?!
BEER GARDEN!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MGA TOL, DI NATIN ITO KAYANG LASINGIN... BOTTOMLESS!

ENTERTAINMENT
E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Emmie G. Velarde
Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

ANGELICA PANGANIBAN in "Santa Santita," a movie snubbed by awards groups

Religious movies in the spotlight

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

AFTER grossing almost a billion dollars worldwide, **Mel Gibson**'s "The Passion of the Christ" will be released again as Holy Week presentation. In the United States, it has reopened in 970 theaters, and is expected to add some $200 million more to its total gross.

Even better, moments of extreme violence have been shortened or edited away, and it is hoped that the R-18 film will now get a less restrictive classification, so younger views can finally get to see it, and be moved and inspired by it.

Gibson guested on some TV shows recently to plug the Holy Week reissue of his religious hit, and the hosts of those programs took advantage of his presence to ask him how he felt about the "snub" that "Passion" got at the Oscars.

Very charitably, Gibson demurred and pointed out that there was no total snub, because the movie did get nominated in three (minor) categories.

At any rate, he went on to smilingly declare that, early in the build-up period to the awards, he had decided not to push his film. He opted not to play the "money game" that requires spending a lot for promotions, so that a movie impinges upon the consciousness of Academy voters.

Well, a TV host remarked sardonically, that was probably the best thing to do, since Gibson couldn't expect to get on the good side of all of the well-entrenched Jews in Hollywood, who never liked his film because they feared that it would put the blame on them for Jesus' death.

That wasn't the movie's intent, of course, but the animosity and acrimony prevailed.

Gibson then went on to reveal that he was getting involved in a couple of TV shows, including one in which he plays the harassed father of a rowdy bunch of boys.

What about another religious film? On that score, nothing is definite thus far, so we'll just have to wait and see.

On the local film front, it's instructive to note that another religious drama, **Laurice Guillen**'s "Santa Santita," is also getting the cold shoulder from some film awards groups.

Well, it's keeping very good company with Gibson and "Passion"!

What is it about religious movies that turns off some awards groups? Most film buffs know darn well that "Santa Santita" was one of the best Filipino movies produced last year, so why the cold-shoulder treatment?

Can't some jurors recognize quality when they see it? Or could their disdain betray an anti-spirituality bias—or, worse, an even more vindictive scorn for some of the artists involved in the production?

If there's some truth in that perception, then it's an indictment of the awards groups, because it injects a subjective bias into the awards process, which should be as objective as possible.

As for the new religious movie, "Ang Birhen ng Manaoag," it's getting favorable comments from some devotees, but very bad reviews from cineastes. Go figure!

Movies on TV

ON HBO, tonight at 10:30 p.m., "Last Man Standing." 12:10 a.m., "The Hollow." Tomorrow at 2:30 p.m., "Live from Baghdad."

On Cinemax, today at 8:30 a.m., "A Death in the Family." 11:30 a.m., "Unforgiven." 3:30 p.m., "East of Eden." 10:30 p.m., "The Bourne Identity." Tomorrow at 4 p.m., "Billy Madison."

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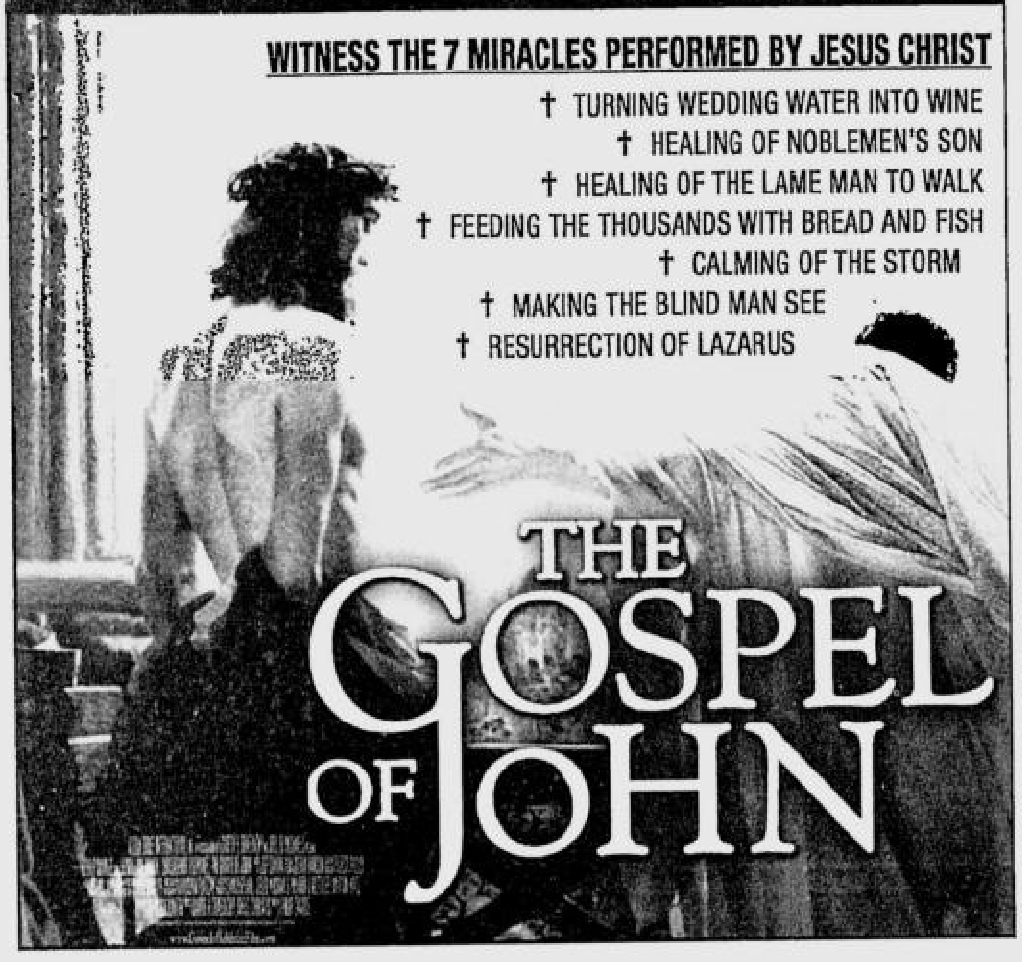
† CALMING OF THE STORM
† MAKING THE BLIND MAN SEE
† RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS



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6 ROBOTS

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1 BONSINSABA
2 INFECTION
3 (DOLBY) MASK-2 SON OF THE MASK
4 (DTS) CONSTANTINE

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2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 (DOLBY) MASK-2 SON OF THE MASK

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1 (SDDS) CHAIN OF COMMAND
2 WALANG MALISYA
3 KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
4 (DTS) CONSTANTINE

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2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 (DTS) ROBOTS
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5 FINAL CUT

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1 MASK-2 SON OF THE MASK
2 INFECTION
3 (DTS) BIRHEN NG MANAOAG
4 (DOLBY) THE AVIATOR

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1
2 LEMONY SNICKETS
3 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
4 FINAL CUT

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CONSTANTINE
ROBOTS
CURSED

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❶ BAHAY NI LOLA 2
❷ HOSTAGE
❸ ROBOTS
❹ BIRHEN NG MANAOAG
❺ SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
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THE CASCADES: LIVE IN MANILA *April 15 Friday, 8pm*
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RUFA MAE: Simple

OGIE: Nerd

LUKE: Ring leader

GENEVA: Dorky

What they were like in school

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

IT'S GRADUATION time once again! Graduates are the sum total of all the moments and memories of their school life, while parents are relieved that they are over and done with the sum total of their children's tuition fees. Graduates are raring to use in their lives all the lessons that they have been armed with, only to find out that there are a lot of things not learned in school. As **Mark Twain** once said: "I never let schooling interfere with my education!"

I cornered some celebrities and asked what they were like as students and what their most memorable moments in school were. It's always good to look back but after the graduation rites you gotta remember that you can not drop out nor cut classes in life's bigger classroom. March on! March proud, graduates!

Rufa Mae Quinto

"I was a very simple schoolgirl. I didn't wear make-up—not even powder or lipstick. One of my most memorable moments was getting a gold medal as First Honor in my sophomore year."

Ogie Alcasid

"I was quite a nerd in school. Very quiet and studious. It was only in college in UP (University of the Philippines) that I became my crazy self. My unforgettable moment was being ridiculed in school initiation during college."

Geneva Cruz

"I was very conservative—a member of the Demure Girls of Class '94 together with my good buddies **Precious Hipolito** & **Bernadette Alysson**. Now I am far from being shy or conservative conservative! Ha! Ha! And I was always late! One moment that stands out in my memory is walking in the hallway of OB Montessori, wearing a blue striped shirt that was green yellow and blue, green pants and green loafers. When I passed by the seniors they aid "*Palakang Palaka ha!*" My guy best friend saw me crying. He asked what was wrong and I told him. He ran to the 4th year class and started a fight with them together with my fellow juniors. My friend was warned by the principal and I felt really bad. Hello! Just because of my dorky outfit, a major commotion took place on campus! It was really embarrassing!"

Luke Mejares

"When I was in school I was very diligent despite the fact that I had to juggle singing engagements with my studies. I made sure, though, that I did well in school because it was my ultimate goal to graduate, whether or not I was going to make it as a professional singer later on. I remember back in high school—we were supposed to wear new uniforms but our class thought that it was ridiculous since we only had a year left to go. What happened was that I started a protest and refused to wear the new uniform. Fortunately I had my classmates' support and they followed suit. Next thing I knew I was called to the principal's office. Unfortunately I wasn't successful. We were made to wear the new uniforms. But still—no guts, no glory. At least I tried."

As pour moi, my high school yearbook describes me as "the party girl who attends parties even on weekdays but oftentimes gets the highest marks in class which is never a surprise to her classmates." (Maybe I bribed them to say that about me....ha ha!) One moment I'll never forget was when we had our bivouac in Batulao and I fell into the canal during the obstacle race. I've always been such a weakling when it comes to sports. I hated PE. Even if I didn't win in any competition during the bivouac, I ended up being awarded as "Wet & Wild Gal" for my canal misadventure!

(For feedback e-mail wateringholeshangri-la@yahoo.com or dollyannetruefaithband.com)

DID YOU KNOW...

DINA Bonnevie, star of ABS-CBN's drama series "Hiram," was seen with her kids, **Danica** and **Oyo Boy Sotto**, at the Alabang Town Center last Sunday night rushing to watch the last full show of "Hitch."

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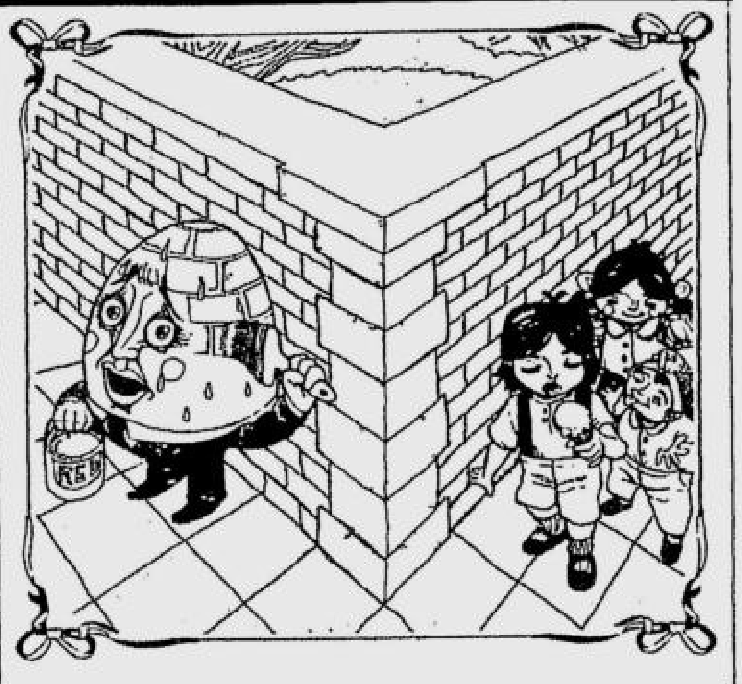
HOSTAGE R13 12:15,2:45:5:15,7:45,10:15	MILLION DOLLAR BABY PG13 1:30,4:20,7:10,10:00	ROBOTS GP 12:00,2:00,4:00, 6:00,8:00,10:00



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2	ROBOTS 10:50, 1:20, 3:50 6:20, 8:50 GP
3	ROBOTS 12:50, 2:50, 5:50 8:20, 10:50 PG-13
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② CONFIDENCE
MTRCB: R-13

③ HOSTAGE
MTRCB R-13
11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00

④ HITCH
MTRCB : PG-13
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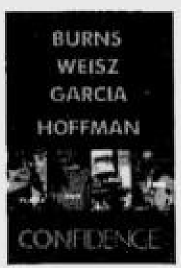
CONFIDENCE
MTRCB Rating: PG 13

ROBOTS
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4 ROBOTS
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6 CONFIDENCE
7 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
8 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
9 CURSED
10 RESERVED
11 RESERVED
12 RESERVED

sm city fairview
1 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
2 CONSTANTINE
3 CURSED
4 HOSTAGE
5 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
6 BAHAY NI LOLA
7 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest
8 ROBOTS
9 SANTA SANTITA smmoviefest
10 FINAL CUT
11 CURSED
12 MILLION DOLLAR BABY

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1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
4 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
5 ROBOTS
6 HOSTAGE
7 CONFIDENCE
8 CURSED

sm city sta. mesa
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
5 HOSTAGE
6 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
7 ROBOTS
8 HITCH
9 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
10 CURSED

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1 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
2 FINAL CUT
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED
5 HITCH
6 CURSED
7 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
8 ROBOTS
9 HOSTAGE
10 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD

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2 HOSTAGE
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10 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
11 HITCH
12 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 ROBOTS
2 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
3 HOSTAGE
4 CURSED

sm city bicutan
1 HOSTAGE
2 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
3 ROBOTS
4 CURSED

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 SON OF THE MASK
2 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
3 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest
4 HITCH
5 ROBOTS
6 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

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2 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
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4 HITCH

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2 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest
3 HITCH
4 MAD HOUSE

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1 ROBOTS
2 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
3 CURSED
4 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest

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1 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest
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3 ROBOTS
4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
5 HOSTAGE
6 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
7 THE FINAL CUT
8 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest

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1 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest
2 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
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2 ROBOTS
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6 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
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7 RESERVED
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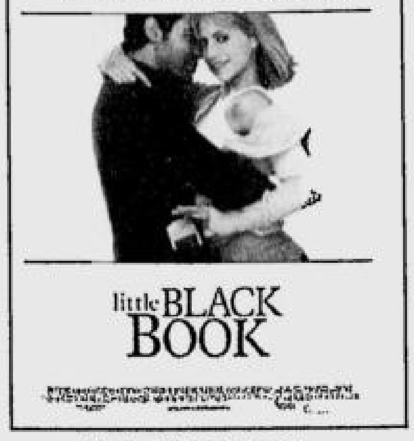
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2 HOSTAGE	2 HOSTAGE	2 HITCH	6 ROBOTS	GUARANTEED SEATS 2 ROBOTS 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00	2 ROBOTS
3 HITCH	3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 HOSTAGE 12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30	7 CONFIDENCE	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	3 THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
4 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2	4 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CONFIDENCE 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30	4 HOSTAGE
5 MILLION DOLLAR BABY				GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HOSTAGE 1:35, 4:00, 6:25, 8:50, 11:15	5

GB1 GREENBELT 1	
1	SPANGLISH 11:25, 2:00, 4:35, 7:10, 9:45
2	ROBOTS 11:50, 1:50, 3:50, 5:50, 7:50, 9:50

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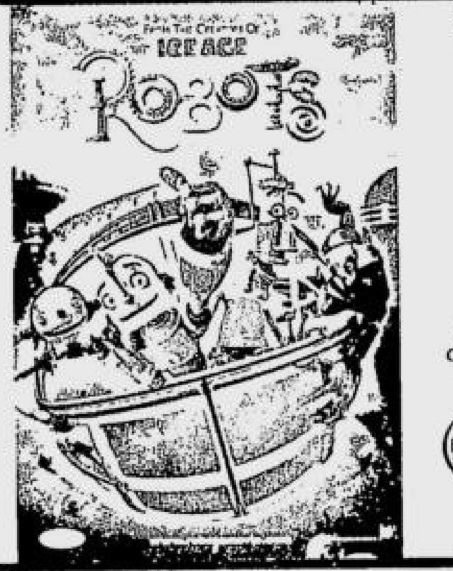

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9 CURSED
10 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

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3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD
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3 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

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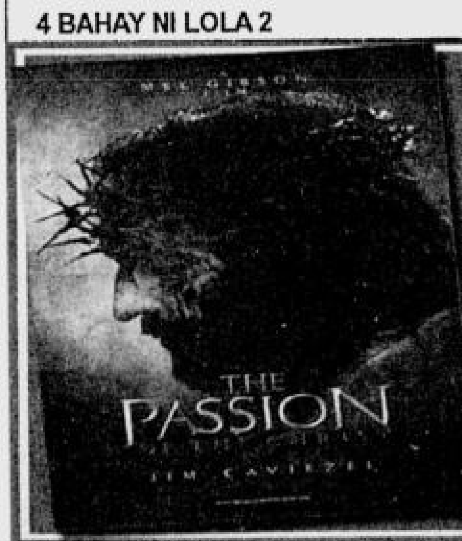
3 HOSTAGE
4 PASSION OF THE CHRIST



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BONO sings to Catherine Zeta-Jones

U2 now in Hall of Fame

NEW YORK—Minutes after U2 was officially bumped up to legendary status after a raucous, sentimental induction in to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Irish quartet headed to the media room to answer questions about their momentous honor.

But perhaps only a rock band fronted by Bono would first be asked about everything but music.

"Bono! ... What about the Nobel Peace Prize?" one reporter called out.

"Rock star is already having the cream of the cake," Bono replied.

Groundbreaking

Over U2's 30-year journey from the streets of Dublin to becoming the world's most important rock band, there have often been times when Bono's charisma, his charitable efforts—and more recently a fashion line —have eclipsed his collaborators and lifelong friends: U2's other members, guitarist The Edge, bassist Adam Clayton and drummer Larry Mullen Jr.

But on Monday evening, if not always clear to others, their rock peers recognized the collaborative achievements of perhaps the most groundbreaking rock group in the past two decades.

"*Uno, dos, tres, catorce*," said Bruce Springsteen, quoting the Spanish countdown in U2's recent hit "Vertigo," as he inducted the band into the rock hall with a loving, humorous tribute.

"The translation is one, two, three, fourteen. That is the correct math for rock 'n' roll. The whole had better equal a lot more than the sum of its parts—or else you're just rubbing two sticks together," Springsteen said.

When the group performed some of their biggest hits, everyone, from celebrities like Catherine Zeta-Jones to grizzled industry folk jumped out of their seats to cheer them on.

Good ol' Jerry

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of rock 'n' roll, the hall —also celebrating its 20th induction dinner—brought in Jerry Lee Lewis, now a stooped old man. He moved slowly to the stage to perform "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." But he still managed to kick over his stool and sit on the piano keys.

Musicians, industry professionals and journalists vote on the inductees. Hall of fame members are permanently enshrined in Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. *AP*

ENTERTAINMENT

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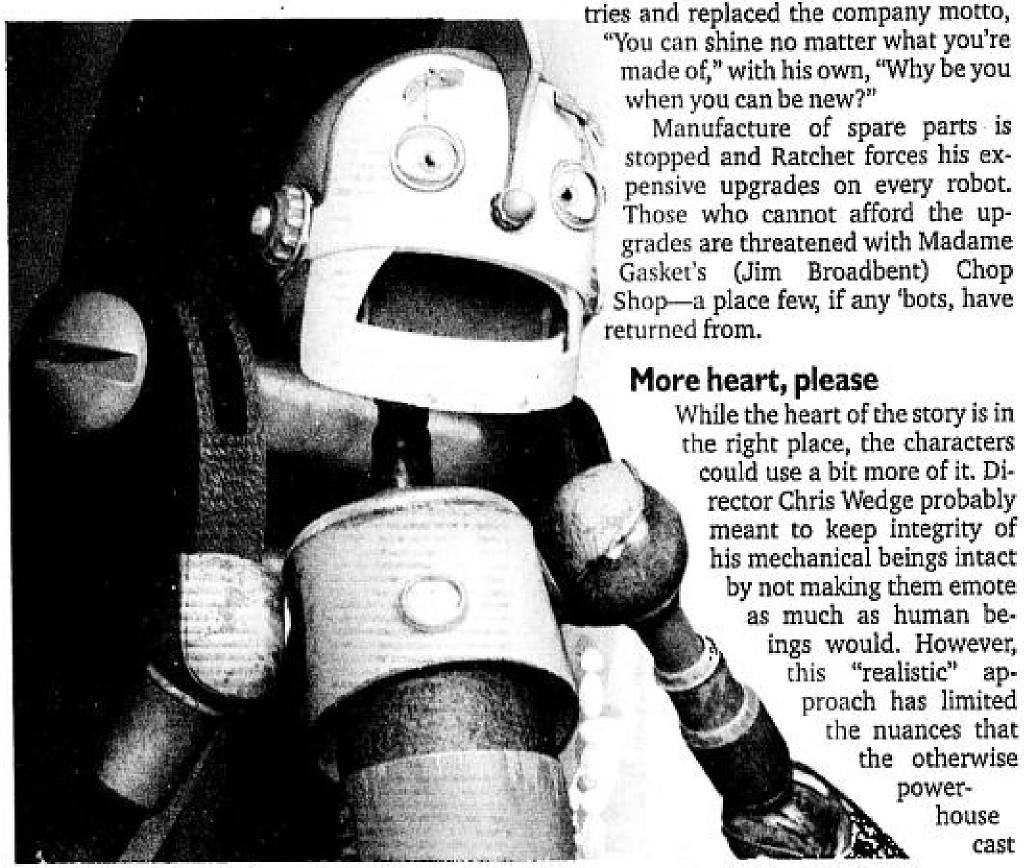
Editor Emmie G. Velarde

'Robots': Tinkerific visuals but the story needs repair

By Eline Santos
Junior Inquirer

REVIEW

"ROBOTS" from 20th Century Fox and Blue Sky Studios, creators of "Ice Age," is a visual animation feast with a plot that sadly needs a few screws tightened. Rodney Copperbottom (Ewan McGregor) is tinkering his way to a dream: he wants to be a great inventor like Bigweld (Mel Brooks), an icon credited with making life better for every robot. Off to Robot City then Rodney goes, hoping to be taken it by Bigweld Industries, where innovative ideas are always welcome. He brings his magnum opus, Wonderbot, a fully loaded coffeepot that washes dishes at super speed—and that's only one of its many helpful functions.



Instead of the warm welcome he expected, the young inventor finds the door slammed shut. Ratchet (Greg Kinnear), a sleek and sly executive, has virtually taken over Bigweld Industries and replaced the company motto, "You can shine no matter what you're made of," with his own, "Why be you when you can be new?"

Manufacture of spare parts is stopped and Ratchet forces his expensive upgrades on every robot. Those who cannot afford the upgrades are threatened with Madame Gasket's (Jim Broadbent) Chop Shop—a place few, if any 'bots, have returned from.

More heart, please

While the heart of the story is in the right place, the characters could use a bit more of it. Director Chris Wedge probably meant to keep integrity of his mechanical beings intact by not making them emote as much as human beings would. However, this "realistic" approach has limited the nuances that the otherwise powerhouse cast could have put into their "performances."

Some of the other stars that give voices to the "Robots" characters are Robin Williams as Fender, Halle Berry as Cappy, Amanda Bynes as Piper Pinwheel, and Jennifer Coolidge as Aunt Fanny.

Bigweld is one of the more disappointing characters, story-wise. Halfway through, when you fear the worst explanation for his prolonged absence (did Ratchet have him killed?), the audience finds the supposed icon of Robot City pouring his energy into dominoes, having given up without a fight. In his initial confrontation with Ratchet, Bigweld is taken out with one swing of Ratchet's arm.

The main thing going for this film is the seamless quality of the animation. Some robot characters have details like rust, chipped paint and oil splotches to make them look real, while others have the sheen of polished metal. Robot City itself outshines many elements in the movie.

"Ideas start with a setting," Wedge has been quoted as saying. "I thought a mechanical world would be a place I'd want to visit, creatively."

The transport system, Crosstown Express, is a combination of pinball machine and roller coaster, among other things. It is a delight to watch, though not a ride you would want to go on.

There is also a lot of humor in the film, though some jokes, like that one on making babies, are really meant for adults more than kids.

Fender provides a lot of funny moments. According to the actor Williams: "Fender is literally the sum of his parts—many of which he seems to always lose. [So] he has to be a scrounger—he always needs new parts."

Though a far cry from the hyper genie in Disney's "Aladdin," Fender still gets the most laughs, particularly during his "transformation" into Britney Spears.

If you're in the mood for gadgets, widgets, and flying coffeepots, this one's for you.

FINAL FLIGHT
Many more Mulawin will be sacrificing their lives for the sake of others. Who will they be? Will good finally triumph over evil? How far will Aguiluz and Alwina's love take them? Will Gabriel learn to let go? The answers will be known tonight in the gripping series finale.

Mario repeats: 'It's personal'

NEW YORK—It's personal.

That's what Mario Vazquez is insisting about his decision to drop out of Fox's "American Idol" talent search. Fans were buzzing Monday about why such a popular contender would forfeit "Idol" fame.

"My gut and intuition told me it wasn't time to do this," Vazquez told The Associated Press. "I had to focus on some personal areas in my life with the little bit of privacy that I have."

The New Yorker's own mother, Ada, didn't know about his decision until a local TV reporter showed up at her doorstep.

"I do not know," she told Fox 5 News. "I heard it from your mouth so I do not know what's happening. I feel horrible about it."

Theories

Fans felt just as bad. Messages on the official "Idol" Web site ranged from "Post here if you will miss Mario" to "Mario Vazquez Fans UNITE!" Working together, many attempted to piece together the puzzle on why such a promising contestant would call it quits. Here are three theories—realistic and ridiculous—that fans conceived, and here's what he told the AP in a telephone interview Monday:

1) He didn't want the "American Idol" contract.

Sure, the winner of "Idol" receives a heaping helping of media attention, but they also are beholden to a record deal with the show's executive producer that many in the industry call restrictive. So maybe Vazquez saw a loophole, some fans posted.

Vazquez: "In all honesty, I'm not able to talk about contracts. It's nothing with 'American Idol' in particular, it's just things I really need to take care of in my life."

2) He's got a skeleton in his closet.

Contestants have been dismissed from previous "Idol" editions. One was arrested, some failed to disclose arrest records and one posed for an adult Web site. Could Vazquez be hiding something just as detrimental, or even more personal, and decided to bow out before it was found out?

"NO, IT'S not about the contract."

"I HAVE no skeletons in my closet." REUTERS

Vazquez: "Crazy." And, for the record, "Everything is fine with my health."

3) He's going to testify in the Michael Jackson case.

OK, it's a stretch. But Vazquez does have a connection to the Gloved One. The crooner sang backup on "Whatever Happens," a track from Jackson's 2001 "Invincible" album. In a questionnaire on the "Idol" Web site, Vazquez called the experience his "proudest moment in life so far." However, Vazquez wasn't listed as a possible witness for either the defense or prosecution in Jackson's molestation trial. And Vazquez is back in New York while the trial is continuing in California.

Vazquez: "Crazy, that's how it goes," he said, singing the answer. "No, I'm not. It was an amazing experience to work with Michael Jackson, who is a legend. It's unfortunate what's happening with that."

Despite all the hubbub, Vazquez was sticking to his story—and to his dreams of music stardom.

"I don't think it's by any means an end to my career," he said. "It's just things you need to take care of in life ... I will always be singing. This won't be the last you hear of Mario Vazquez."

Stay tuned.

AP

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Now you can vote for your favourite Idol on STAR! The more you vote, the greater your chances of winning a pair of all-expenses paid tickets to the Idol finale in L.A.! Exclusive weekly prizes up for grabs!
You can vote via sms immediately after the 4pm airing of American Idol every Wednesday and continue voting until the 'results' show on Thursday.
Just text IDOL to 2366 to download, vote & register and you could be on your way to Hollywood!
Promotion runs from March 16th to May 26th, 2005. Please see flyers or visit **www.startv.com/idol** or **www.abs-cbn.com** for more details.
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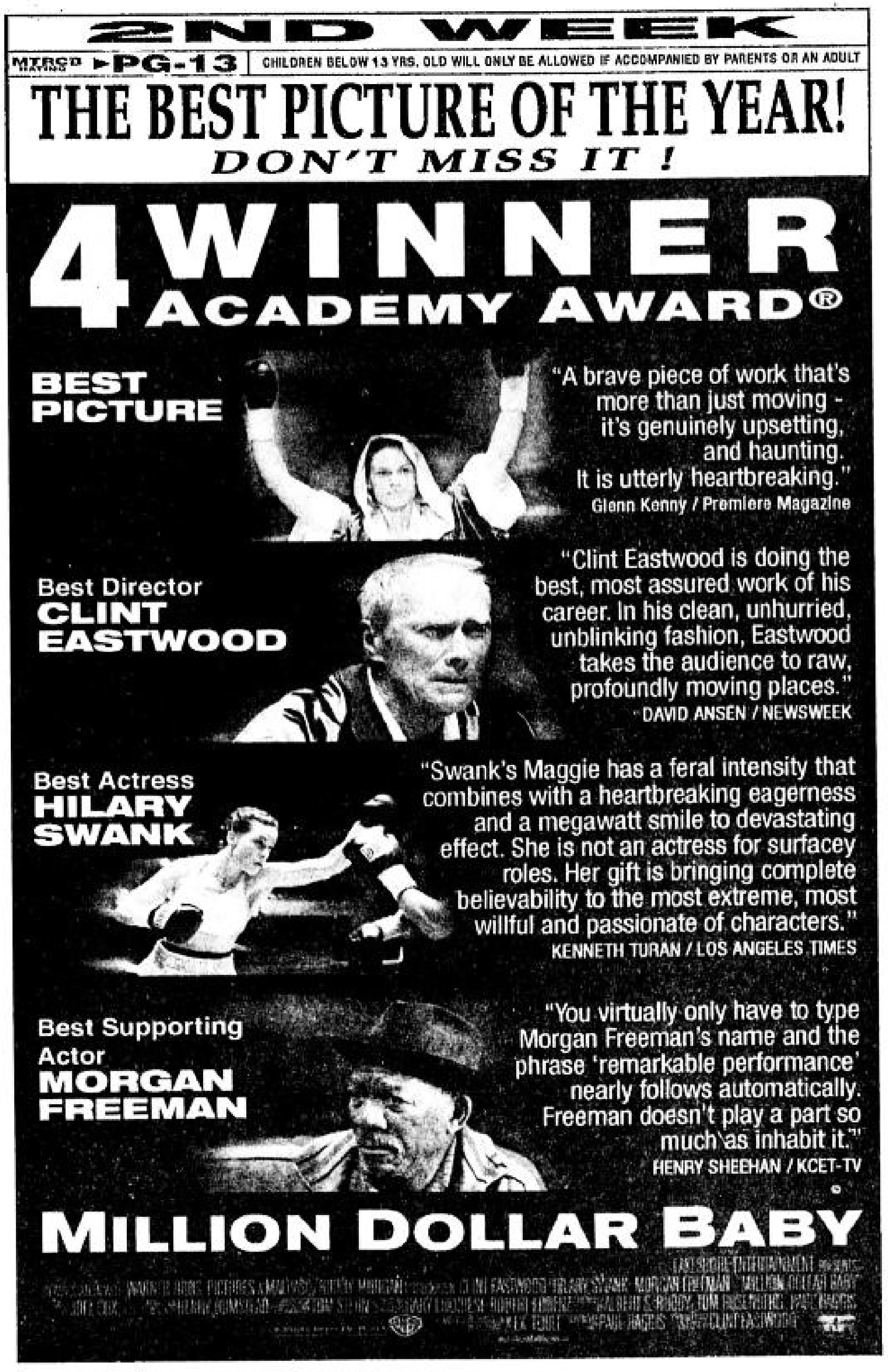
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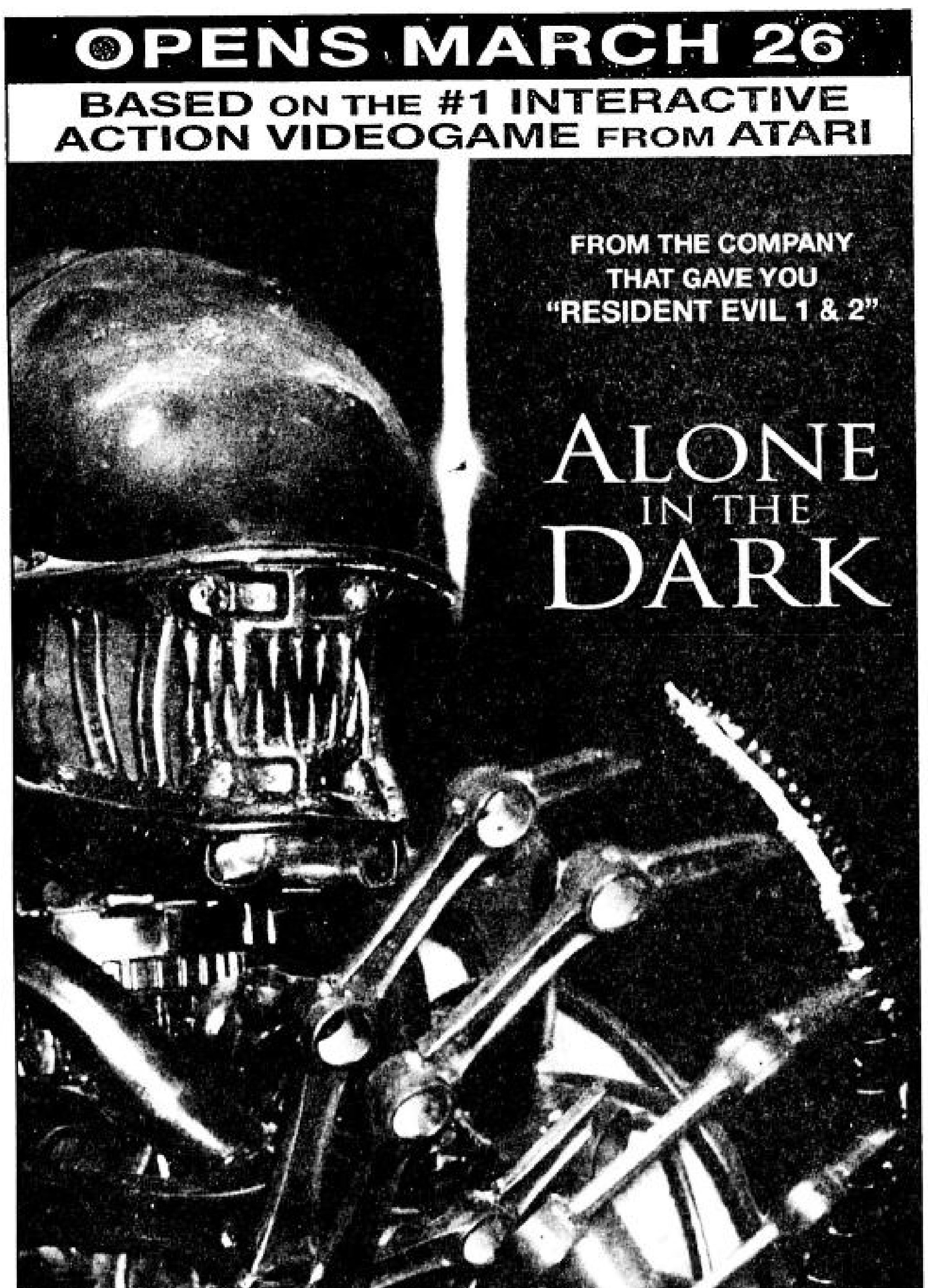
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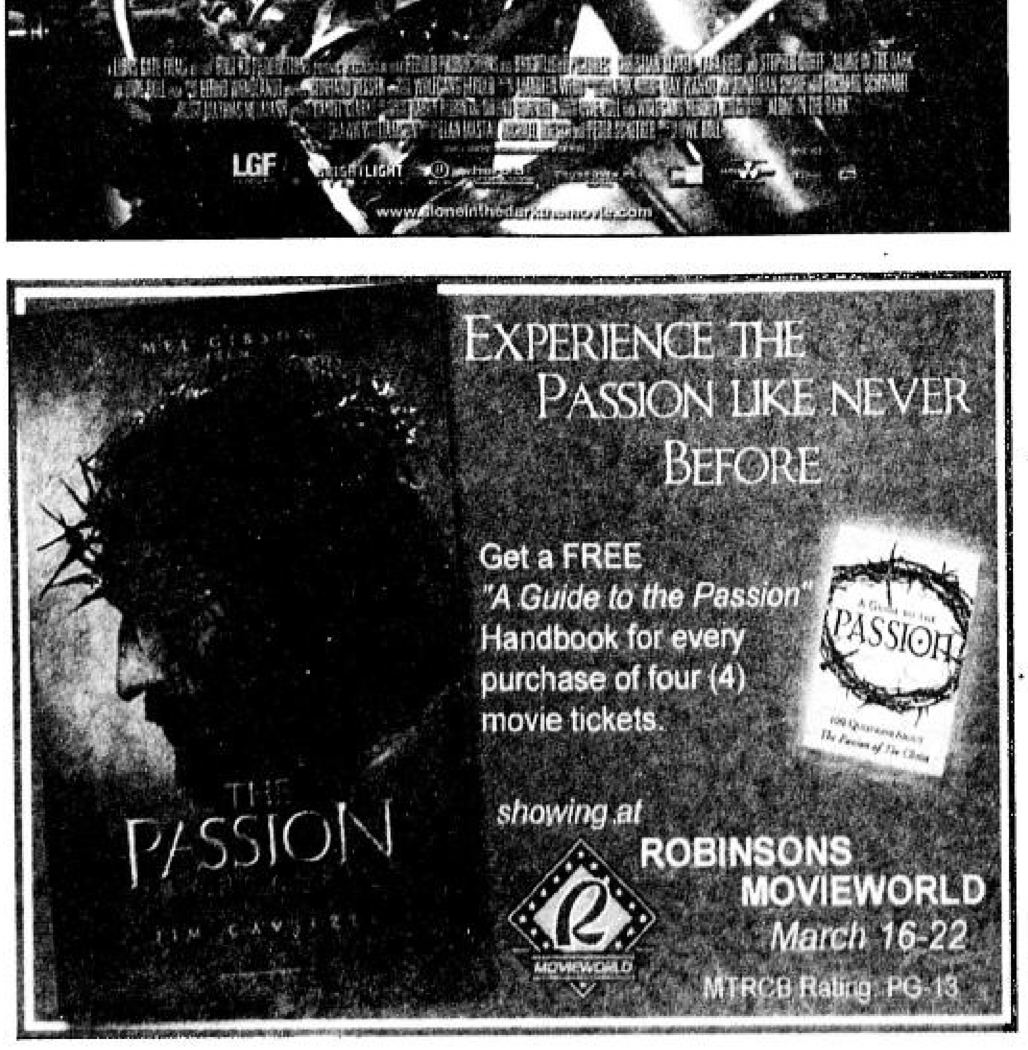
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Quentin Tarantino: Film Icon of the Decade

LONDON—Quentin Tarantino was named Film Icon of the Decade at an awards ceremony on Sunday.

Tarantino joined a cast of Hollywood and British talents recognized during the Empire Awards, voted for by readers of Empire Magazine.

Accepting his award, the 41-year-old announced: ""I hope to give you at least 15 more years of movies."

After that period, he said, he planned to have a theater in some small town. "I will be the manager—this crazy old movie guy," he said. "I've made enough money that nobody even needs to show up at the theater. It's just something to do."

AP

star group of cinemas movie guide IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

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3 Bahay ni Lola
4 Shaolin vs Evil Dead
5 Renovation

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For movie schedules visit www.clickthecity.com

'Lost' premieres tonight on AXN

WHEN a plane crash leaves 48 survivors on a remote Pacific island, a fight for survival begins in what at first seemed like a tropical paradise.

The motley group—including a faded rock star and a Korean couple who speak no English—band together under the leadership of quick-thinking Jack and pragmatic Kate in a battle against the elements.

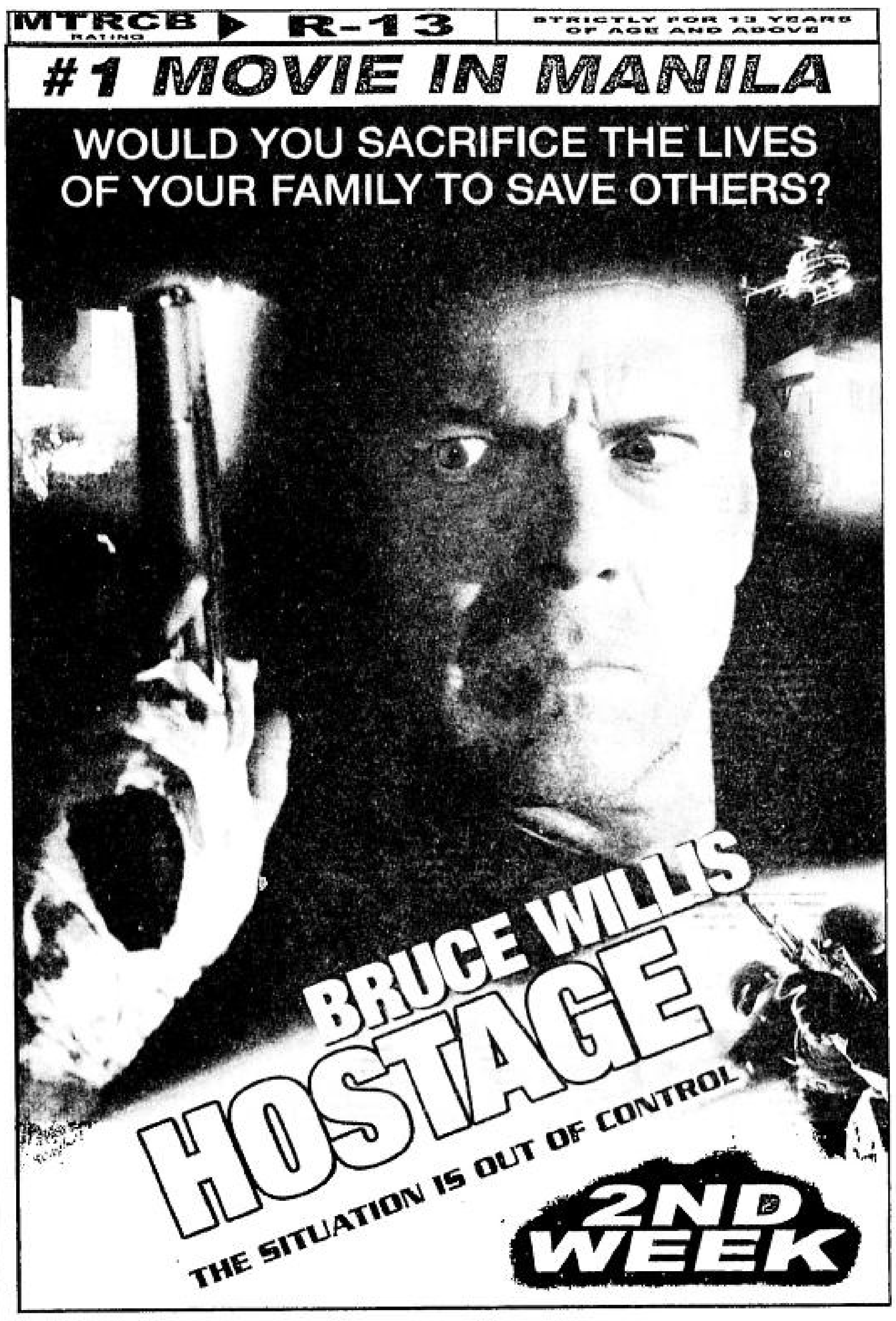
But they soon realize that it's no ordinary island they've landed on. The weather is temperamental, and the ecology is such that polar bears are able to survive on it. Most baffling of all, the island seems to have a mind of its own.

And when the survivors start seeing bizarre creatures and ghosts of long dead people, a deep, dark terror descends on the community.

Even as each one's shocking secrets unravel, they all realize they have no choice but to put aside conflicts and rally as one or perish.

"Lost," a 2005 Golden Globe nominee for Best TV Series, premieres tonight on AXN. Regular telecast Thursdays, with repeat broadcasts Fridays at 1 a.m. and 12 noon.

It was created by JJ Abrams ("Alias," "Felicity") and Damon Lindelof ("Crossing Jordan").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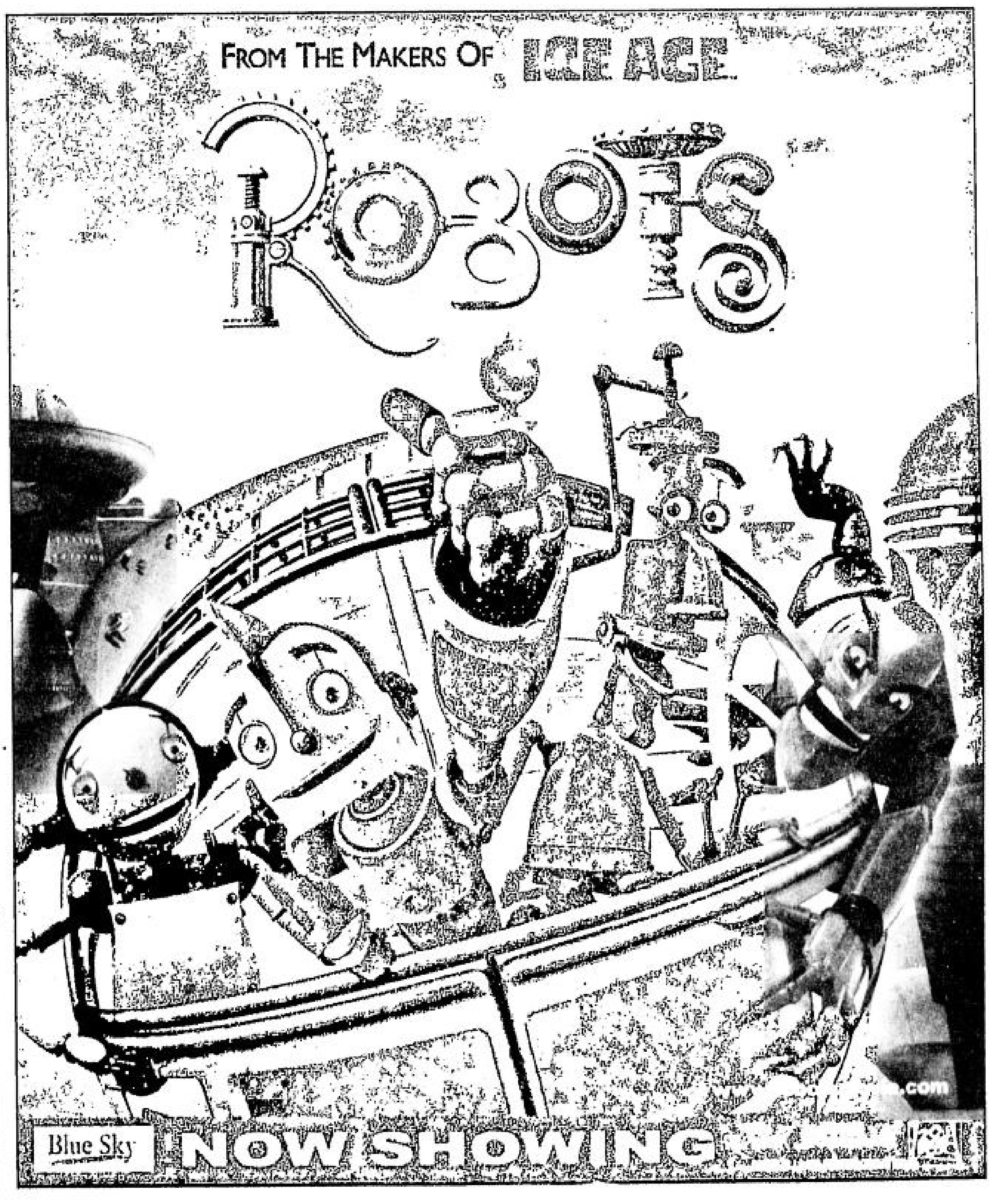
THE SITUATION IS OUT OF CONTROL
2ND WEEK


FROM THE MAKERS OF ICE AGE
ROBOTS
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NOW SHOWING

MEN of Blue Blood, singing professionals from different fields

Retro bands at Funn Side

SHOW TIME

FOR retro dancing, there's Funn Side Entertainment Restaurant & Bar, where a live band plays every evening.

Main event this month is the special stint of one of the country's most sought-after retro bands, called Men of Blue Blood (Mobb) tomorrow night starting at 8. Mobb consists of singing professionals from different fields. They say their love for retro music has kept them young at heart. In a short span of time, Mobb has caught the attention of fans in the live circuit. The band plays music to which party makers can dance the boogie, cha-cha, tango, swing, and bossa nova.

The band schedule for the rest of the month: Rhythm & Babes, March 29; Men In Gold, March 22; Moonstrucks, March 30; and Johnny Cash and The Jukebox/ Cardinals, March 31. Ballroom dancing on all Mondays, with male and female dance instructors to help clients polish moves.

On March 19, "Great Inspiration 2" goes onstage, headlined by top-rate solo performers groups under the direction of Angie Magbanua: Jinky Llamanzares, Liza & Nolyn Cabahug, Bimbo Cerrudo, Rich Edwards, Pinky Marquez, Lance Raymundo, Tara, The Flashbacks and Cardinals.

Funn Side is located at 62 Timog Ave. (near the Tomas Morato rotunda) in Quezon City.

Dancers at Bykes

Bykes Cafe Bistro in Makati also has its own dance studio that opens at 2 p.m. Dance enthusiasts who avail of the studio facility can relax tonight at Bykes. Featured entertainers are the Latin ensemble Arriba and Marce David Band.

Robot, not the movie

Niel de Mesa, Palanca Award-winning playwright presents "Deus Ex Machina," a one-act drama about a robot who falls in love with an affectionate human girl named Red. The play will be staged tomorrow, and again on March 19 and April 1-2 at One Acts Theater 2/F Forab Bldg. 121 Kamuning Rd., Quezon City. It runs back-to-back with Jihan Estrella's "Death by Obituaries," a light children's comedy featuring Koiné Theater Foundation scholars Tricia Javier and Laika Maninang.

Perks at Merk's

At Merk's Bar Bistro in Greenbelt 3, Acoustic Jive plays tonight, and Forte band tomorrow.

On March 19, patrons can jam with Aretha and the Souled Out Band. Bernie Uy dishes out the laughs on March 21 and 28.

Richard Merk goes on stage with Eddie Katindig and Sandra Lim on March 30.

Bagaberde gig

Also on March 21, Primeline's new talents Jell Mateo and Rizza Navales perform at Bagaberde with Jerome and Lei.

'Martir sa Golgota'

Tanghalang Sta. Ana stages "Martir sa Golgota," at Plaza Moraga, Tondo on March 21, Pagsanjan Town Plaza on March 22, Plaza Hugo, Sta. Ana on March 23, San Juan Plaza on March 24 and Glorietta Activity Center on March 26. The play stars Alma Concepcion, Ivy Violan, Ricky Davao, Yul Servo and newscaster Candace Giron. For inquiries, call 721-0801.

Weekday shows

On March 22, Livewire Band performs at Suburbia in Malate.

Ladine at Century

Ladine Roxas performs with guitarist Jerome and percussionist Lei at the Century Park Hotel on March 30 .

LADINE Roxas

Do you have star potential?

REGAL Entertainment and the Directors' Guild of the Philippines Inc. (DGPI) have joined forces to launch what they promise would be a first-of-its-kind acting workshop.

The workshop aims to create new stars for film and television via an intensive eight-week course on acting.

Among the instructors are award-winning DGPI directors Joel Lamangan, Maryo J. De Los Reyes, Jose Javier Reyes, Carlos Siguion-Reyna, Mark Meilly, Tony Reyes, Jose "Joe" Carreon, Gil Portes, Soxy Topacio, Khryss Adahlia; Emmanuel Borlaza, Joey Romero, Tony Reyes, Jeffrey Jeturian, Edgardo "Boy" Vinarao, Erik Matti, Quark Henares, Rico Ilarde and Mel Chionglo.

For the culminating activity, participants will star in five video presentations, each one directed by a member of the DGPI.

The Regal-DGPI Summer Acting Workshop will be held at the Regal Studio complex on Valencia Street, near Gilmore and Broadway, in Quezon City.

Deadline for registration is April 2.

Call 914-0500 for details.

MTRCB RATING PG-13 Parents are strongly cautioned in bringing along kids below 10 years of age because of some scenes that might stress their sensibilities.
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Huwag nang alamin...
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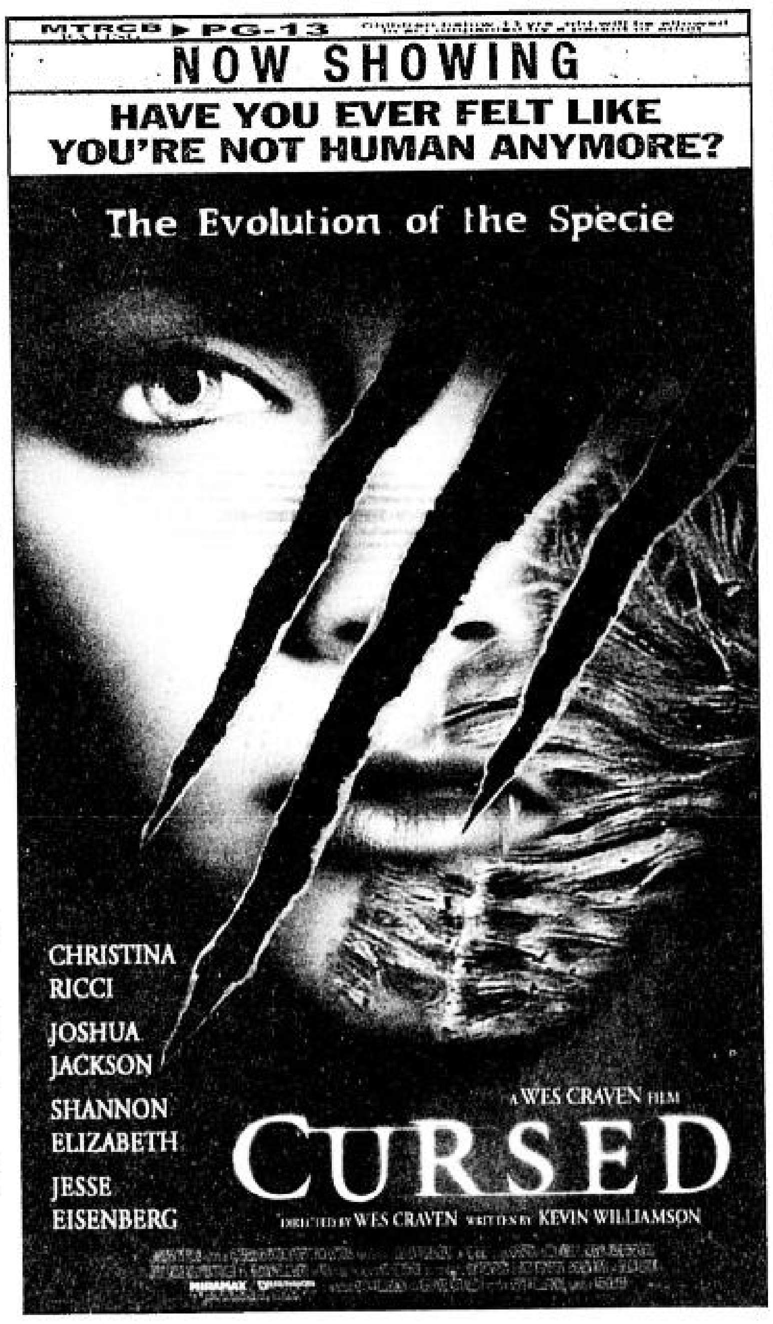

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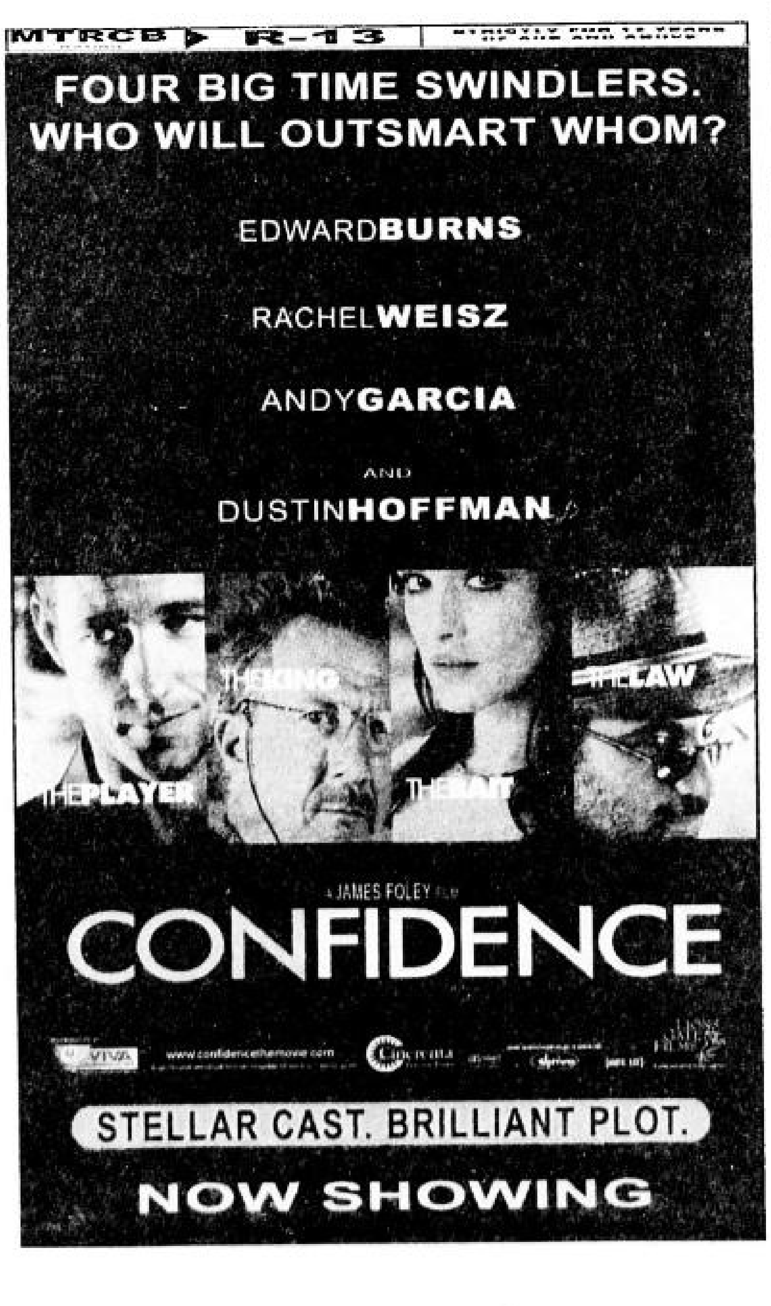

MTRCB R-13
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SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
The battle between two Taoist Masters awakens the King of Vampire

'I became addicted to goose bumps, ghosts and vampires — and the minor chords on the soundtrack that signaled their presence'

Confessions of a fright flick junkie

By Paul Y. Daza
Contributor

AS A SCHOLAR of films, both local and foreign, I've been trying to make sense of the movie-watching habits of Filipinos for years. One thing I've always wondered about is why Filipino children love watching horror movies, especially during Christmas time. Every year, during the Metro Manila Film Festival, children drag their parents to see local horror flicks like "Spirit of the Glass," "Bahay Ni Lola," or to use a more dated example, the "Shake, Rattle and Roll" series.

What exactly is the appeal of movies like "Tiyanak" and "Halimaw Sa Banga" to a child in grade school? As someone who's been a fan of horror movies for as long as I can remember, I believe one reason is that children use horror movies as a way of earning peer acceptance. When I was a pre-teener in 1980, the Betamax had just been introduced, and all my classmates were talking about a scary new haunted house movie called "The Amityville Horror." To be considered "in" at the time, you should have seen "The Amityville Horror" on Betamax. If you hadn't, you either didn't have a Betamax player or were too *duwag* to watch the supposedly true story of a family being menaced by evil spirits, including a demonic pig and a swarm of houseflies.

Succumbing to peer pressure, I watched "Amityville" and became hooked on horror flicks. I became addicted to goose bumps, ghosts, vampires and the minor chords on the soundtrack that signaled their presence. Around the time "Amityville" came out, there were other frightening films like "Salem's Lot," "The Changeling" and "Halloween," and I sought them all out in the movie house or in the video rental store. By the early '80s, I was a certified horror movie junkie.

Special effects

In the beginning, I watched horror movies just so I could tell my classmates that I was as brave, or braver than they were. After a while, it became clear that I enjoyed the movies for their own sake. I loved the idea that horror movies could show me things I could never see in real life, thank goodness, such as blood oozing from walls, ghostly children floating outside of bedroom windows, or men turning into werewolves. Which brings me to the second reason why I think kids enjoy horror movies—the special effects. Where else but in horror movies can you see ghostly hands clawing their way out of a television set (as in "Poltergeist"), or a timid teenager cloaked in pig's blood using telekinesis to get back at the classmates who maltreated her ("Carrie")?

In your closet

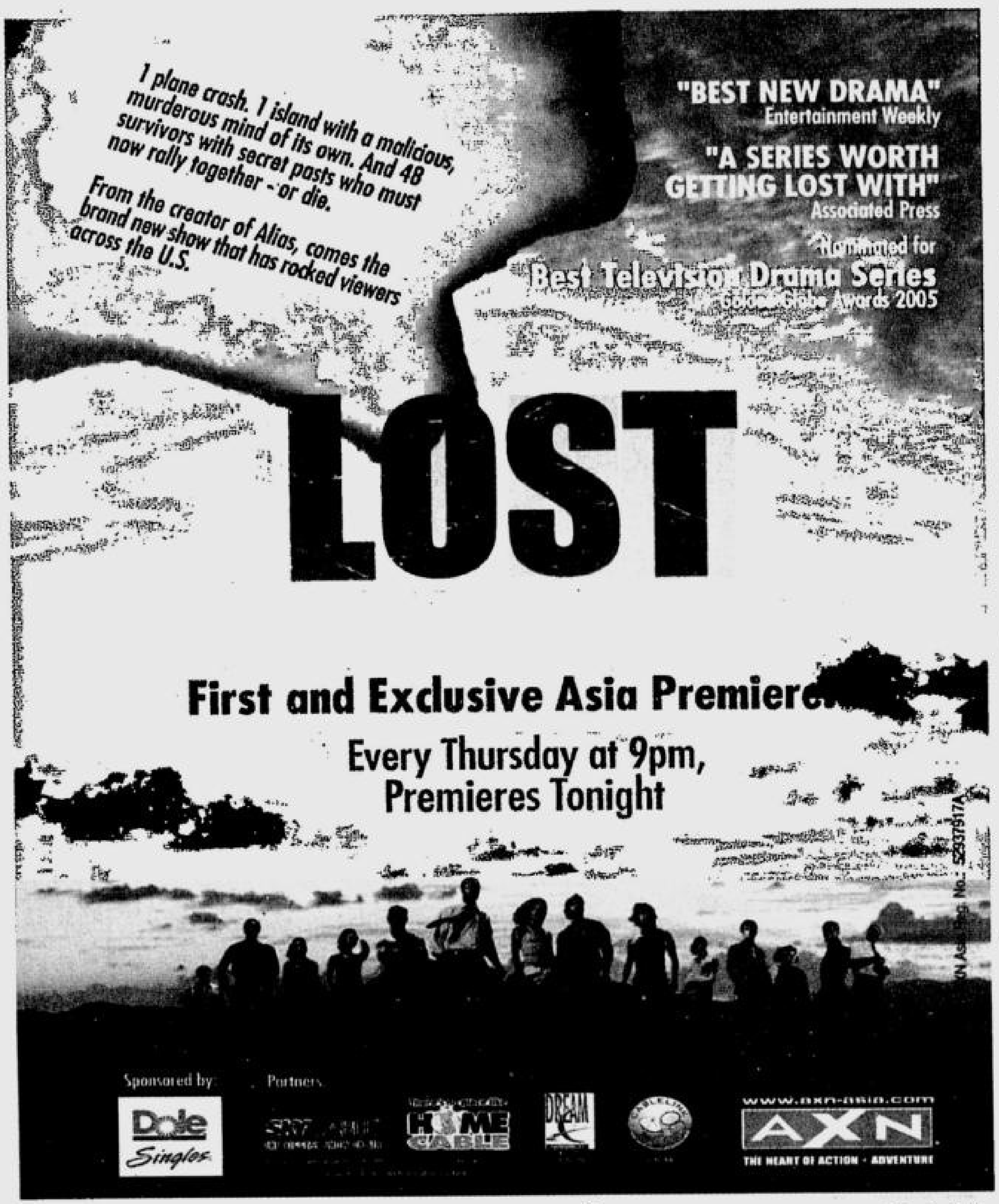
And then, there's a third factor, which I call proximity or immediacy. Fairy tales with wizards and hobbits happen in magical forests and castles, while science fiction epics like the "Star Wars" movies happen in futuristic-looking cities. Horror movies, on the other hand, can take place in an abandoned house in your neighborhood. Or that monster can be hiding in your closet.

In short, events that shape the typical horror movie are closer to one's experience of the world and are therefore more real than, say, Middle Earth, or a galaxy far, far away.

When the horror movie is set in the Philippines and features Filipinos, such as the "Spirit Warriors" movies or "Feng Shui," how much closer to the life experience of the typical Filipino moviegoer can you get?

Peer pressure, special effects, and proximity to one's life. These are just three reasons why a Filipino child may find himself "enjoying" a horror movie. Which brings us to "Bahay Ni Lola 2," whose trailer I caught in a theater recently. The movie, starring Gloria Romero, Dingdong Dantes, Karylle, and child star Kristel Fulgar, seems to be a horror movie designed to appeal to the whole family. First of all, it's about a family being scared out of its wits by a slew of angry, elderly female spirits. For the kids, there's even a cute little girl in the cast who has a few creepy looking dolls. Special effects? The preview has a stomach-turning shot of a cockroach coming out of what appears to be a fester in a person's leg.

Like the best, most successful horror movies, "Bahay Ni Lola 2" looks like it could be taking place in a house not too far from ours, to people we could encounter or even know. With its experience making horror hits like five "Shake, Rattle and Roll" films, two "Spirit Warrior" flicks and the monster hit that was the first "Bahay Ni Lola," it seems like Regal Films has perfected the formula for horror pictures. Will this new "Bahay" capture lightning in a bottle a second time? Only the restless spirits of the undead, and Mother Lily Monteverde with her sixth sense, know for sure.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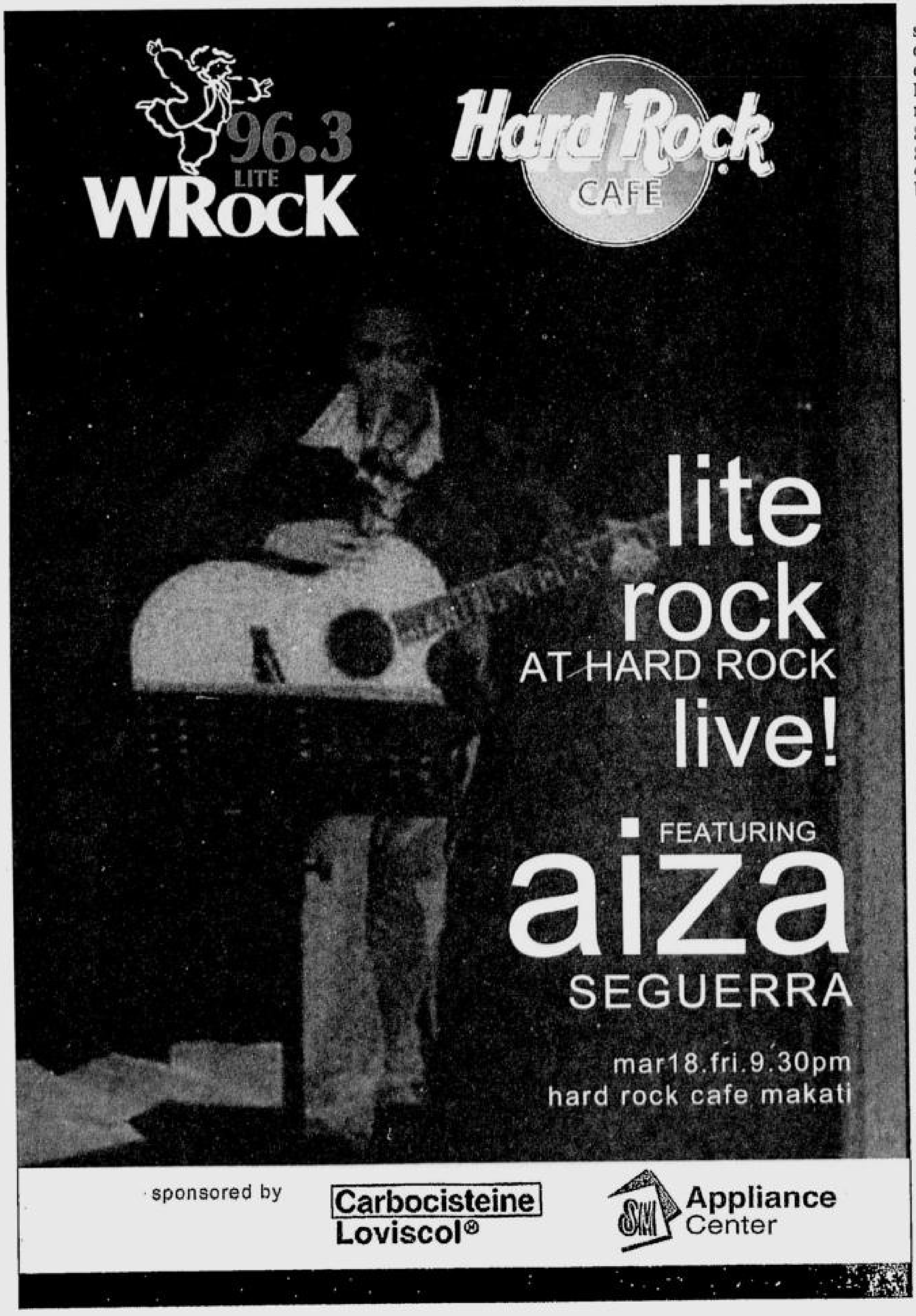
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February payments surplus hits $962M

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES posted a balance-of-payments surplus of $962 million in February, the highest in three years, on strong inflow from fresh government borrowings, investments, export receipts and overseas remittances.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday reported that the BOP surplus in February was a turnaround from the deficit of $227 million in the same month last year.

This shored up the two-month BOP to a surplus of $685 million, a sharp improvement from the $821-million shortfall in the same period in 2004.

"The BOP moved to a significant surplus in February as exports and OFW (overseas Filipino worker) remittances increased and capital inflow rose with the national government bond issue and the strong portfolio (investments)," BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

The Philippine government successfully issued $1.5 billion worth of 25-year global bonds in late January despite credit rating downgrades by Standard & Poor's and Moody's Investor Service. The proceeds from the bond issue were deposited with the BSP last month.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as transfers. Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation is a deficit item while any transaction which gives rise to a receipt like exporting or inward remittance is a surplus item.

"(The surplus) was driven not only by debt flows but also by strong investment flows. There is therefore good quality BOP position," BSP Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo explained.

"As long as the market is convinced that we are doing our best to address the basic issues of fiscal consolidation, power and financial sector reforms, we should expect such flows to continue and continue strongly. That is the challenge to the leadership," Guinigundo added.

The BOP surplus in February was the highest recorded by the Philippines since March 2002, when the surplus hit $1.45 billion.

The BSP expects the BOP to post a surplus of $464 million for the whole of 2005.

Remittances from OFWs are seen to significantly boost the

FEBRUARY/ B4

Price war puts pressure on telco profits

By Clarissa S. Batino

(First of two parts)

SPECIAL REPORT
WATCH RELATED STORY ON INQTV, TONIGHT AT 10:30

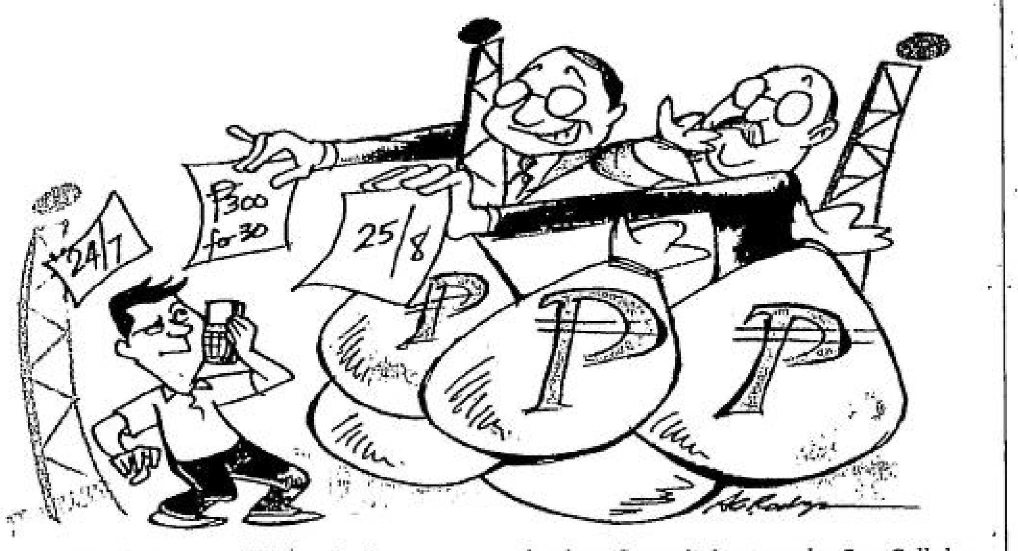
THE PRICE war that has gripped the telecom industry has raised a troubling question. Have the two hugely profitable wireless leaders been overcharging their subscribers all along?

Overpricing is the topic of conversation at neighborhood sari-sari stores, inside the FX on the way to work, even in the session halls of Congress.

"Sun Cellular has made us realize that mobile phone services should not be as expensive or as costly as they are now being offered by the two dominant telecom firms," an influential congressman, Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano, said in a privilege speech last month.

He was referring, of course, to Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc. In one of the world's most vibrant telecom markets, Sun Cellular, the trade name of Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc. of the Gokongwei family, is running a poor third.

But it has certainly gotten the attention of both Smart and Globe. Last October, it introduced its 24/7 plan, which allowed an unlimited number of voice calls and short-messaging system (SMS) or text messages within the network for only P250 a month or P100 for 10 days, on top of existing subscription plans.



Suddenly, it was a different ball game. Within a month, Sun Cellular reached the elusive 1-million subscriber mark. (It had started operations in March 2003.) By the end of February, its customer base reached 1.7 million; in the last five months, it has grown at a pace much faster than during its first 19 months in business.

While Sun Cellular's numbers still pale in comparison with Smart and Talk N' Text's 19.2 million and Globe and Touch Mobile's 12.5 million (statistics as of the end of last year), the third player's pricing strategy rattled the two leading telcos.

Affiliate companies of both Smart and Globe petitioned the National Telecommunications Commission to order Sun Cellular to stop its 24/7 promotion. And then this month, both Smart and Globe rolled out their own versions of Sun's unlimited plan.

From March 8 to April 11, Globe is offering a similar eat-all-you-can menu (but only for subscribers to its Touch Mobile brand): P300 for 30 days of within-network calls and text messages; as low as P50 for five days of unlimited texting on top of existing plans.

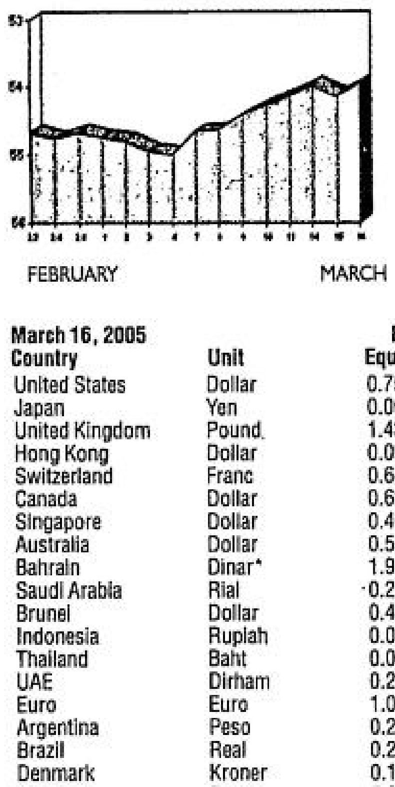
Smart went a step further. Now it is selling 10 days of unlimited calls for P115 and six days of unlimited text for P60 within its wireless network. (Smart's buffet is available only to Smart and Talk N' Text prepaid subscribers.)

PRICE/ B4

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



P53.94 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 15, 2005

Y104.28 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 15, 2005

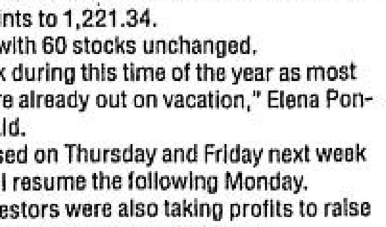
GOLD: $441.30-441.80
per ounce Hong Kong, March 15, 2005

March 16, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.751597	1.000000	54.1520
Japan	Yen	0.007188	0.009563	0.5179
United Kingdom	Pound	1.437129	1.912100	103.5440
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096365	0.128213	6.9430
Switzerland	Franc	0.644871	0.858001	46.4625
Canada	Dollar	0.622389	0.828089	44.8427
Singapore	Dollar	0.462265	0.615044	33.3059
Australia	Dollar	0.593163	0.789204	42.7370
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.993732	2.652661	143.6469
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.200426	0.266667	14.4406
Brunei	Dollar	0.460848	0.613158	33.2037
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0058
Thailand	Baht	0.019548	0.026008	1.4084
UAE	Dirham	0.204644	0.272279	14.7445
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.330500	72.0492
Argentina	Peso	0.257838	0.343053	18.5770
Brazil	Real	0.270651	0.360101	19.5002
Denmark	Kroner	0.134264	0.178638	9.6736
India	Rupee	0.017294	0.023010	1.2460
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.197815	0.263193	14.2524
Mexico	New Peso	0.067077	0.089246	4.8328
New Zealand	Dollar	0.556244	0.740083	40.0770
Norway	Kroner	0.122360	0.162800	8.8159
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012666	0.016852	0.9126
South Africa	Rand	0.123496	0.164312	8.8978
Korea	Won	0.000749	0.000996	0.0539
Sweden	Kroner	0.110008	0.146366	7.9260
Syria	Pound	0.014479	0.019264	1.0432
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024355	0.032404	1.7547
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000350	0.000466	0.0252

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.34% lower

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices closed 0.34 percent lower yesterday in extended profit-taking although buying in telecom and mining stocks helped cushion the downturn, dealers said.

They said investors have continued to cash in on recent gains to pay for shares of SM Investments Corp., one of two companies that launched an initial public offering this month.

Investors were little moved by the bloody aftermath of a prison revolt by al-Qaida-linked inmates put down Tuesday after a police assault.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index lost 7.19 points to 2,099.12 after trading between 2,095.30 and 2,108.47.

Volume was 1.29 billion shares worth P903.15 million. The broader all-shares index gained 5.21 points to 1,221.34.

Losers led gainers 54 to 25, with 60 stocks unchanged.

"Traditionally, trading is weak during this time of the year as most fund managers and investors are already out on vacation," Elena Ponceca of Unicapital Securities, said.

Financial markets will be closed on Thursday and Friday next week for the Easter break. Trading will resume the following Monday.

Ponceca added that local investors were also taking profits to raise funds ahead of the April deadline for income tax payments.

Mark Alan Canizares of Citiseconline.com said investors were taking a breather following major initial public offerings from Manila Water and SM Investments and after the market's run-up to fresh five-year highs last week.

AFP

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* Based on R.L. Polk statistics purchase numbers from 1991-2004
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DLR ordered to account for ₱28B in Marcos wealth

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE CONGRESSIONAL oversight committee will continue its investigation of the Department of Land Reform's utilization of P28 billion in Marcos wealth.

The fund was supposed to be used for the continuing implementation of the agrarian reform program.

According to Oversight Committee member Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III, Congress will demand full disclosure and accounting of the Marcos funds, and how the government agencies, particularly the DLR, have gone about utilizing the funds.

Some P1 billion is still left unaccounted for, from the P28 billion released to the DLR," Tañada yesterday told reporters at the sidelines of the Fair Trade Alliance's national consultation-dialogue with small rice and corn farmers.

The House committee has already asked the agency to submit supporting documents, he said.

Tañada said that the Office of the Ombudsman was supporting the Oversight Committee's ongoing investigation.

He said the Ombudsman also sought to question agrarian reform officials led by then Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan on the reported disbursement of some of the Marcos fund amounting to P30 million. The money reportedly went to a private entity.

TAÑADA

"The Ombudsman has ordered an investigation of the coconut processing facility in Calauag, Quezon," Tañada said.

The facility is said to be run by a private company.

Last month, small farmers organizations supported by nongovernment organizations Pambansang Ugnayan ng mga Lokal na Nagsasariling Organisasyon ng Mamamayan sa Kanayunan (Unorka) and the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS), demanded an investigation of the financial statements of the DLR, formerly the Department of Agrarian Reform.

The group in a statement claimed that P17 billion of the P28 billion had already been spent. But a substantial portion of the spent amount was diverted to non-CARP related activities, which did not directly benefit the farmers.

Some of the activities mentioned were the hybrid rice program of the Department of Agriculture which reportedly cost P544 million; the P30 million used for a private corporation in Calauag, Quezon; the P540 million that went to irrigation projects that were diverted to lands not covered by the agrarian reform program; and, the reported P4.9 billion in cash advances that went to the Land Bank of the Philippines.

"How could the acquisition and distribution of lands in the Bondoc peninsula be funded if there is no money left?" asked Enrico Cabanit, Unorka secretary general. "The money should not go into dubious ventures."

DTI draws up plans to boost RP car exports

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry announced plans to tie up with European experts to look into programs that would develop the competitiveness of the local automotive industry.

According to the DTI, vehicle exports went up 33 percent to $1.76 billion last year.

Data from the DTI also showed that automotive export was the fastest growing sector among the 11 priority sectors in 2004.

In the past four years, the country's export of automotive parts had been growing by an average of 22 percent a year.

Last year's growth was attributed to increased demand for electrical wiring harnesses—the sector's top dollar earner.

The trade of harnesses represented 43 percent of all auto parts exports.

The DTI said demand for other items, such as alternators, stators, rotors, immobilizers, gear boxes, steel belted tires, lead acid batteries and exhaust pipes also rose "significantly."

Maintaining growth

Last year, the bulk of auto parts exports went to Japan, with $538 million worth of products, or 33 percent of total shipments.

The United States placed second, with $425 million or 24 percent of total shipments, and Thailand came in third, with $277 million or 10 percent.

As for Europe, shipments to the United Kingdom and Germany reached a combined amount of $73.8 million.

The figure represented 4.2 percent of the total auto parts exported in 2004.

To maintain the sector's competitiveness and growth, the DTI said its Bureau of Export Trade Promotion would start coordinating with the European Union's Center for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries.

The effort was in line with the government's "Program in the Engineering and Automotive Sectors 2005-2010."

The five-year program would involve the pre-selection, product adaptation and participation in the Export Seminar in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

The program would culminate with the sponsored participation of suitable companies in European trade fairs such as the Hanover Industrial Fair and the Automechanica Trade Fair, both in Germany.

Strategy

Last week, the department announced it was drawing up a strategy to make the local vehicle manufacturing sector more competitive.

DTI officials hope to edge out other Southeast Asian countries in this sector with the help of the Japan External Trade Organization, or Jetro.

One of the steps being taken was the upgrading of the skills of automotive workers through the Philippine Automotive Industry Skills Certification Systems (PAISCS).

PAISCS seeks to adopt uniform and nationwide certification procedures designed to evaluate the knowledge and skills of workers, based on established written and hands-on curricula.

The project was designed to establish standards for key skills in automotive and car parts manufacturing which, in turn, would result in the improvement of the quality of production.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
EDSA, GREENHILLS, MANDALUYONG CITY

CORPORATION FINANCE DEPARTMENT

IN THE MATTER OF

SM INVESTMENTS CORPORATION Registration of Securities

- Registrant -

ORDER

Upon consideration of the Registration Statement and other papers and documents attached thereto which were filed for and on behalf of **SM Investments Corporation**, the Commission resolved to render effective the same for the registration of **Five Hundred Thirty Million (530,000,000)** common shares pursuant to Section 12 of the Securities Regulation Code and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. The said securities consist of One Hundred Five Million (105,000,000) shares for primary offering. Ten Million (10,000,000) shares for secondary offering, at an issue price of Two Hundred Fifty Pesos (P250.00) each, and the remaining outstanding shares of Four Hundred-Fifteen Million (415,000,000).

Let a Certificate of Permit to Offer Securities for Sale be issued in favor of **SM Investments Corporation** authorizing the sale of the aformentioned securities.

Let this Order be published at the expense of the corporation once in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philipines within ten (10) days from date hereof. The corporation is hereby directed to furnish the Commission with a copy of the affidavit of publication of this Order.

SO ORDERED.

EDSA, Mandaluyong City, Philippines, March 11, 2005.

JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN
Director

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Venue : SETEC, Seoul, Korea
Exhibit Items: Kitchenware/ Gift Items/ Personal accessories/Furniture/Cosmetic/Bathroom items/Home Décor/Textile/ Home Repair items/Home Electronics Appliances/Outdoor/ Leisure/Sports and Health Items, Lighting, etc.

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"SEOUL FOOD 2005" /"SEOUL PACK 2005"
Date : May 17 to 20, 2005
Venue : KINTEX, Goyang, Korea
Exhibit Items: foods/ additives/ raw materials/confectionery/ bakery/beverages/ liquor/ coffee/tea/ food processing eqpt. / machineries for restaurants, hotels, supermarket, etc.

All packaging materials and supplies, machines, printing machines and supplies, pharmaceutical and cosmetic packaging/ processing machineries,testing and etc.

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HEATING, AIR CONDITONING, REFRIGERATION AND FLUID EXHIBITION-KOREA (HARFKO 2005)"
DATE : MAY 25 TO 27, 2005
VENUE: KINTEX, Goyang, Korea
Exhibit Items: all heating, airconditioning, refrigeration and fluid items

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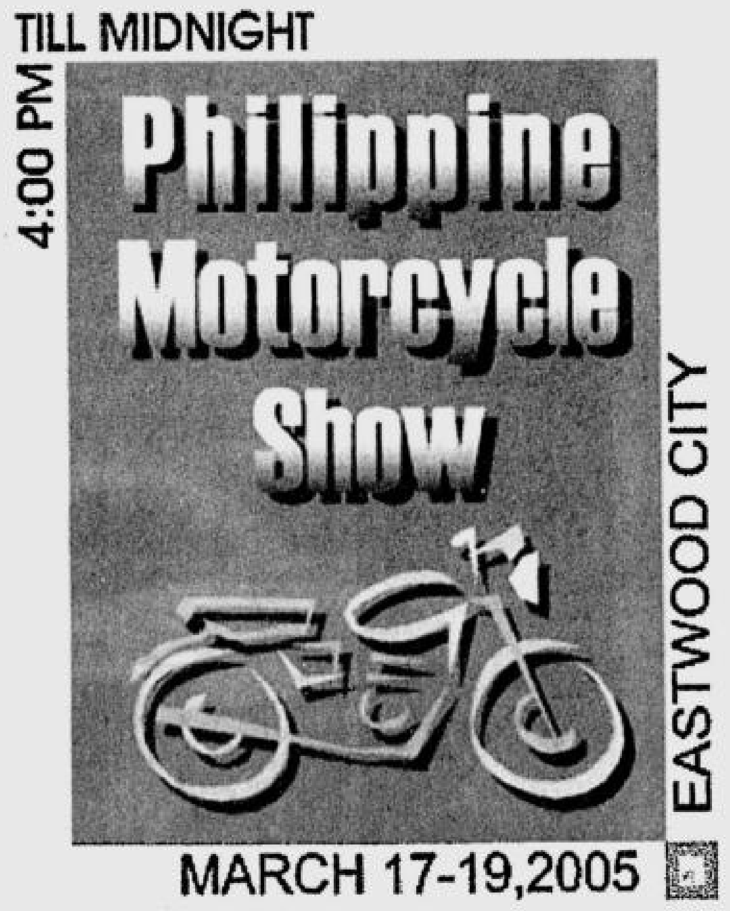
MEETINGS, EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS YEAR



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Unionbank strives to keep annual growth rate of 25%

By Doris C. Dumlao

UNION Bank of the Philippines, the banking arm of the Aboitiz group, is striving to sustain the 25 percent average annual growth in earnings it has seen over the last 10 years.

One of the banking stocks favored by analysts due to good financial ratios, UBP is also moving to its new 48-story headquarters in Ortigas in the middle of the year. The building is one of the tallest structures in the central business district.

In an interview, UBP president Victor Valdepeñas said the bank would have to expand its consumer banking portfolio to sustain the robust growth seen over the years.

"If you have to average it out in the last 10 years, we have been growing at 25 percent per annum in income," Valdepeñas told reporters. "We wanted to sustain that."

Valdepeñas admitted that he did not know if the bank could achieve this target.

"We simply have to do things that will make this objective happen," he said. "We've got to build a consumer franchise that cuts across particular needs of individuals, SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and some corporates."

The UBP chief said the bank would like to diversify its portfolio, and steer clear of the practice of most banks to concentrate on wholesale accounts.

The bank learned its lesson the hard way when it was hit by the Asian currency turmoil in 1997.

The bank is also veering toward increasing the number of borrowers but limiting its credit exposure in each.

"Our exposure per customer will be very modest," Valdepeñas said. "We are talking about P3-P5 million per customer base."

Valdepeñas said that, in the past, the bank's individual exposure averaged at P100-P300 million.

The bank is also keen on unloading more bad assets through its own retail auction system, shunning off the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) deals because the bank preferred to sell its assets at a better price.

"We bide our time," Valdepeñas said. "Our auction system has been very successful. We'll continue with it."

The bank is so far able to dispose an average of P500-P700 million worth of real and other properties owned and acquired through its auction system.

"We've also been very successful in terms of joint venture with developers," he said. "Some of them are big ticket items—large tracts of land are difficult to auction, so we'll do joint ventures. We've got one right now in Makati."

According to Valdepeñas, the bank is currently talking to a developer who may want to put up a condominium.

He also cited the growth of the bank's credit card business and technology-based products, such as electronic cards for government employees and Social Security System members.

"This year, there are so many things moving at our end," Valdepeñas said.

Gov't to sell PNB before Sept. 16

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT and the Lucio Tan group are set to sell two-thirds of their joint shareholdings in Philippine National Bank, a move that will fully privatize one of the country's major government financial institutions.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said the Department of Finance, which takes charge of the government's privatization program, is targeting to accomplish the sale on or before Sept. 16, or the expiration of the banks' shareholders' agreement.

Under the agreement, the government is given the option to initiate a joint sale of their stake in the bank. The government and the Lucio Tan group each has a 45-percent interest in PNB, with the remaining 5-percent stake held by the public.

He said, however, that the Lucio Tan group could buy the government's 45-percent stake if it wanted to keep its significant holdings in the bank.

"The shareholders have done a good job. It's time we bring in a strategic partner who can bring this bank to the next level," Purisima said in a speech before members of the Financial Executives of the Philippines yesterday.

The finance chief, who said the DOF would embark on an aggressive privatization program under his watch, explained that the sale was now appropriate because PNB has already recovered from its financial woes. Besides, the government should really not be much into the banking business, he added.

Purisima said PNB would tap a financial adviser to assist in the determination of the appropriate pricing, but added that the government was expecting to generate about $400 million from the sale.

Proceeds of the sale will be used to pay off advances provided by the state-owned Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to PNB in 2000 to help ease the bank's liquidity problems.

The finance chief said he was confident the government would be able to easily sell the PNB shares considering the good financial figures the bank has posted. PNB also accounts for the biggest share of OFW remittances.

Purisima said three banks have already expressed interest in acquiring the bank's controlling stake, but declined to identify them. "PNB reported profits for two consecutive years (2003 and 2004). The vibrancy is back in the bank, and it's time we allow private interest (to come in)," he said.

PNB earlier reported that it earned P108.8 million in 2004, or 25 percent higher than the P86.8 million posted the previous year. The 2004 net income surpassed the bank's target of P98.7 million.

Deutsche Bank remains bullish on RP

By Doris C. Dumlao

DEUTSCHE Bank remains bullish on the Philippines and plans to expand its investments in the country.

In a dinner reception celebrating the German lender's 10th year of commercial banking operation in the country Tuesday night, Deutsche Bank CEO for Asia-Pacific Kenneth Borda announced the bank's decision to "substantially" increase its onshore investment in recognition of its "well-performing" organization here.

He said the bank was confident of its future investment in the Philippines given the strong local organization led by country manager Eric Cruz.

Juergen Fitschen, executive committee member of the bank's head office in Germany, said: "China and India will exhaust a lot of our capacity (to invest) but we are not ignoring the other countries in the region that also deserve our attention."

"We'll take the Philippines as much more important place for Deutsche Bank. We will continue to be a good citizen of this country," he said.

Deutsche Bank was among the 10 new foreign banks allowed by the BSP to put up branches in the Philippines a decade ago when the banking sector was liberalized.

Cruz reported that today, the bank's equity unit Deutsche Regis business was responsible for 20 percent of market turnover and that in fixed income, the bank was the number one arranger of Philippines debt in offshore markets.

"In custody, Deutsche Bank is among the top three foreign banks managing fiduciary assets in the country, and is a designated clearing bank to a number of top brokers. And in cash management and trade services we partner many of the leading organizations that are here today—tailoring international technology to the local market place," Cruz said.

"Deutsche Bank is also quite active in a number of niche areas. For instance, we've been a key player in a number of capital restructuring programs—working with state bodies, banks and corporations on issues such as distressed debt management," he added.

He said the bank also firmly believed in taking an active role in enriching the communities in which it operated.

Verdana Homes Mamplasan Commences Clubhouse Construction

Verdana Homes Mamplasan, a 35-hectare residential subdivision by Community Innovations Inc., recently kicked-off the construction of its Clubhouse through a grand open house held last February 19.

Located within Verdana Homes Mamplasans' two-hectare Central Park, the Asian-Balinese themed Clubhouse is designed to accommodate various types of indoor and outdoor activities from conferences, to parties, or even sports fests. Surrounding the Clubhouse are provisions for a 25-meter lap pool, a kiddie pool, a pavilion, an open playfield, picnic grounds, jogging and biking trails, and a host of other amenities. Future residents will be delighted to know that the turnover of Phase 1 lots will start by mid-2005 while the Clubhouse is expected to finish construction by end 2005.

The project is located right at the heart of Biñan, Laguna, the hub of an expanding complex of commercial centers, industrial parks, educational and religious institutions. The development can be accessed from the South Luzon Expressway via Sta. Rosa Exit and is merely 15 minutes away from Alabang, and around 45 minutes from Makati City.

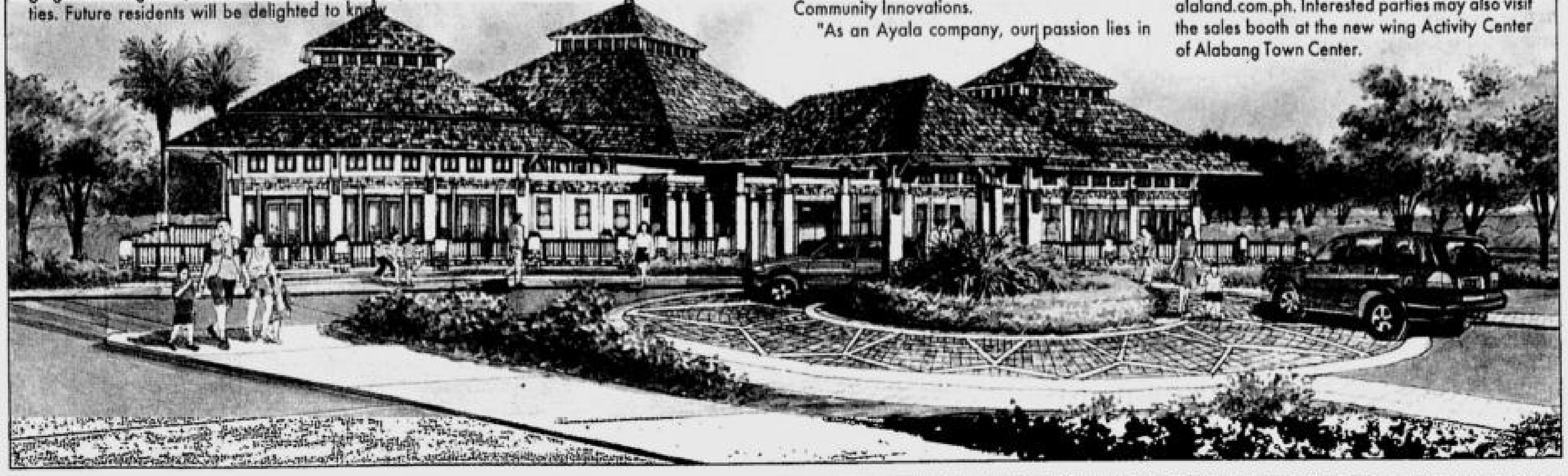
Residents can enjoy the area's proximity to existing prime educational facilities like Brent School, Don Bosco School, St. Scholastica's College, De La Salle University and soon, Xavier School and the University of Asia and the Pacific. Likewise, it is near commercial areas such as Paseo de Sta. Rosa, Robinsons Sta. Rosa, Pavilion Mall and Alabang Town Center.

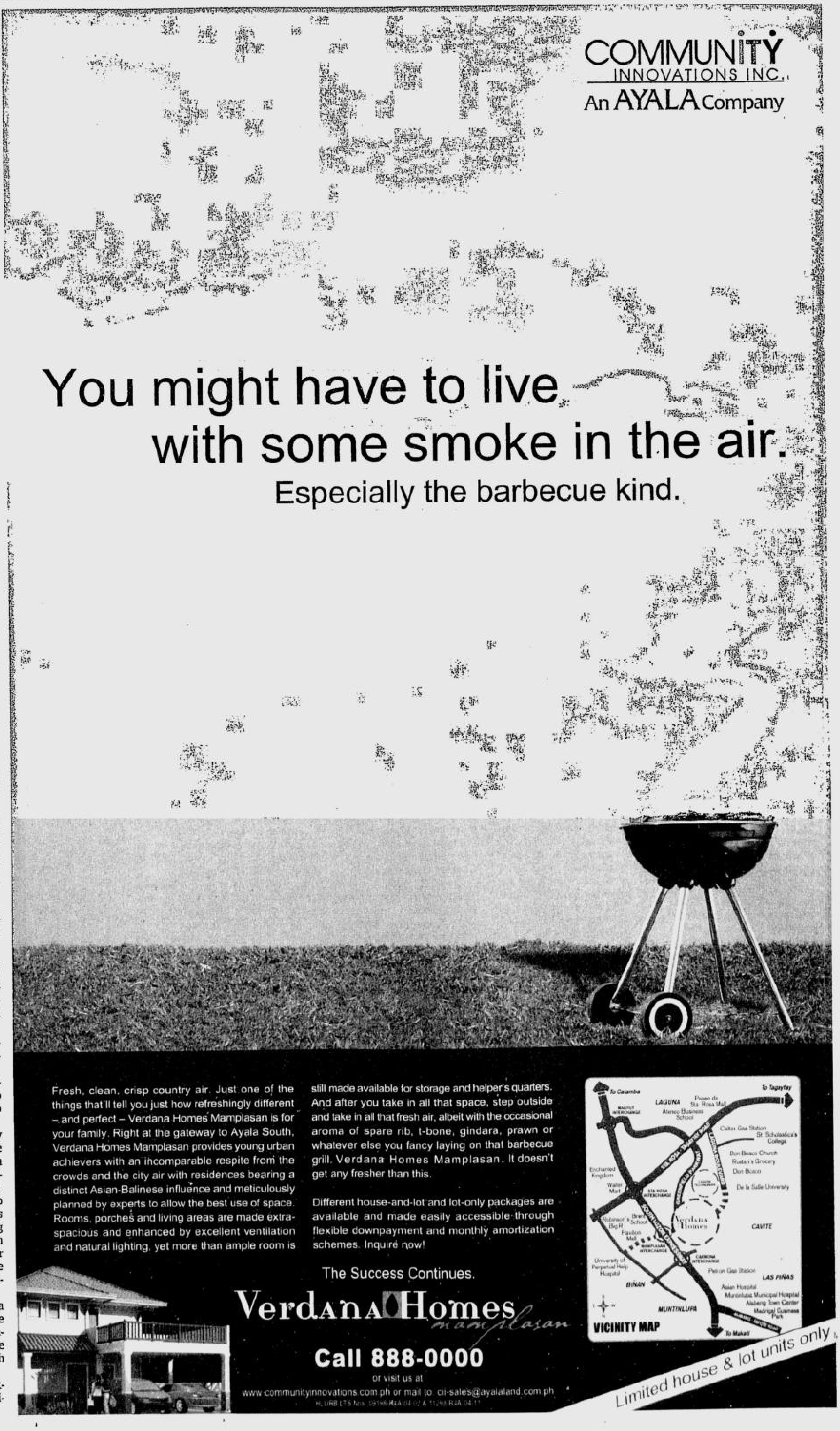
Verdana Homes Mamplasan aims to replicate the success of its sister development, the Verdana Homes in Bacoor, Cavite which is now earning a reputation for its beautifully-maintained community and lucrative appreciation in terms of value.

"Excellence in design, security and amenities are our utmost objectives in the development of Verdana Homes Mamplasan," explains Jonathan Umali, Project Development Head of Community Innovations.

"As an Ayala company, our passion lies in building intelligently-planned and meticulously designed communities for the young market, enabling them to enjoy the kind of lifestyle that's unlike those in more congested cities. Verdana Homes Mamplasan is carefully planned like all other Ayala properties although made more affordable. This guarantees that Verdana will remain a beautiful and thriving community long after the last lot has been sold," adds Umali.

Lot-only and house-and-lot packages are now available through flexible down payment and monthly amortization schemes. For more information, call 888-0000, or visit www.verdanamamplasan.com.ph or email cii-sales@ayalaland.com.ph. Interested parties may also visit the sales booth at the new wing Activity Center of Alabang Town Center.

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SMC mulls over acquisition of New Zealand food firm

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

NOT content with just possibly taking over Australia's leading dairy firm, National Foods Ltd., food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., is now looking at a new target—New Zealand Dairy Foods.

Informed sources said in an interview that San Miguel was looking at the New Zealand firm as part of its ambitious plan to gain a foothold in the food and beverage markets of the Australian-New Zealand rim, and become one of the region's top 10 companies in three years.

It has yet to formally disclose its intent to bid for New Zealand Dairy Foods.

Analysts said the move may be San Miguel's fallback should it fail to get National Foods.

New Zealand's The Dominion Post reported that New Zealand's richest man, Greame Hart, and owner of NZDF, was open to potential buyers for the dairy foods group, which owns popular brands like Anchor, Fresh n' fruity and Fernleaf.

NZDF is worth as much as $700 million, the newspaper reported.

The newspaper also said that New Zealand Dairy Foods corners nearly half the milk market in New Zealand, nearly a quarter of the cheese market and a quarter of the yoghurt market, which is the fastest-growing segment of the dairy market.

SMC has announced a number of acquisitions in the region in the past few months, but its bid for National Foods, worth roughly A$1.78 billion, is the biggest so far.

In Australia, SMC has partnered with Australian juice company Berri Ltd., where it now holds a 51-percent stake.

It also owns 100 percent of Australian beer brewer J. Boag & Sons Ltd., which generates roughly $10 million in net profit a year.

Aside from Australia, SMC has facilities and operations in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Vietnam.

It aims to be among Asia's top 10 food and beverage firms by 2007.

SMC already identified seven countries as part of its regional expansion in Asia Pacific. These include Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan and Australia, initially earmarking $100 million for each expansion.

SMC recently has extended its takeover bid for the Australian dairy giant as it considers whether to revise its A$1.78-billion offer to top the offer of its rival bidder, Fonterra Cooperative Group. Ltd., which submitted a A$1.84-billion offer.

SMC Chair Eduardo M. Cojuangco Jr., and vice chair Ramon S. Ang jointly disclosed that San Miguel Foods Australia Holdings Pty. Ltd.., a wholly owned subsidiary of SMC, has extended the closing date of its offer to acquire shares in National Foods to April 15.

National Food's milk brands include Pura, Pura Light Start, Masters, Famers Union and Classic.

It also manufactures yogurt, fromage frais, dairy desserts, cream and cheese.

SEC won't stand in CAP's way over sale of $8-M MRT bonds

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission announced that it would not object to the proposed plan of troubled pre-need firm College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. to sell anew a portion of its Metro Rail Transit (MRT) bonds to fund tuition fee payments beginning this month, according to industry sources.

The sources said CAP would sell roughly $8 million of its MRT bonds to raise roughly P450 million.

The pre-need firm's MRT bonds, in all, are worth P3 billion today.

The proposed sale of some of the bonds will be used to pay the tuition of students taking their final exams this semester.

The MRT bonds carry a face or future value of roughly $80 million.

The requirements of CAP for the second semester, or between October and March, are down to P600 million after the firm prepaid some of its requirements, the sources said.

Last February, CAP had been required to settle some P700-P800 million worth of tuition fees.

The total requirement for the second semester, or for the period between October to March, is approximately P1.2 billion.

CAP has already paid an estimated P454 million of these liabilities before students take their final exams in March.

CAP sources said the company has to sell some of its trust fund assets to pay maturing obligations since it still does not have a dealer's license.

The SEC suspended CAP's license last year.

SEC sources said CAP is being allowed to draw from the funds to meet the immediate requirement of planholders.

Last December, the SEC approved CAP's plan to sell a portion of its MRT bond assets to pay tuition fees.

SEC chair Fe Barin said CAP could proceed with the plan only if it would place the proceeds into a trust fund and draw from it only when needed.

CAP last year paid tuition fees worth over P2 billion. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

PhilRealty seals joint deal to put up 2 condos in Fort Bonifacio

PUBLICLY LISTED property developer Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp. (PhilRealty) has entered into a joint venture with new property player Next Properties Philippines Inc. for the development of two residential condominiums in Fort Bonifacio.

PhilRealty will contribute the land into the joint venture while Next Properties, which will be renamed Xcell Property Ventures, will be the developer of the project estimated to cost some P2.5 billion.

The 4,200-4,400-square-meter property is the last undeveloped parcel of land facing the Manila Golf CLub at the Bonifacio Global City. It is flanked by Pacific Plaza Towers and One McKinley Place.

Next president and managing partner Rally Martinez told the Inquirer that funding for the P2.5-billion project will be mainly through equity and pre-selling of units.

Next Properties is a joint venture formed this year by International Container Terminal Services Inc. president Enrique Razon, Landco Pacific president Alfred Xerez-Burgos, International Exchange Bank chair Ramon Sy and PhilEquity Management Inc. director Wilson Sy.

The twin towers will have 34 floors each and will cater to the middle to high-end market.

Average sizes are 36 , 60 and 95 square meters for studio, one bedroom and two bedroom units respectively.

Next Properties will be selling units at an average price of P85,000 a square meter.

"We're bullish on the property market. We saw the recovery five years ago. We will continue to accelerate steadily," Martinez said.

The project will be launched this month.

PhilRealty president Amador Bacani said PhilRealty was expected to rake in P800 million in revenues from the project.

The Quezon City court recently approved PhilRealty's financial recovery plan, which calls for the settlement of bank loans through property swap arrangements and debt restructuring.

As a holding firm, PhilRealty has interests in PRHC Property Managers Inc., Tektite Insurance Brokers, Meridian Assurance Corp., Universal Travel Corp., A.Brown Co. Inc., International Exchange Bank and Alexandra (USA) Inc.

It is the developer of the Alexandra Condominium, Philippine Stock Exchange Center, The Alexis, La Isla Condominium, Casa Miguel, Andrea North, The Shangri-La Plaza, Ivy League Square, Manila Golf Crest, and Tagaytay Parklands. It also has projects in Naples and Orlando, Florida. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Price war puts pressure on telco profits

From page B1

Calling their promotion Smart 25/8, the company said it had devised a system to prevent network traffic jams (a common complaint about Sun Cellular's plan) through the use of an "operator" that would queue all unlimited calls.

Wallowing in profits?

"So it's possible to bring down the charges and pay less for the services of mobile phone companies. If Sun Cellular can charge cheaper rates, why do Globe and Smart charge much higher?" Albano had asked last month, in Filipino.

On repeated occasions, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri has also said that the country's telecom services were among the priciest in the region.

A quick look at the income statements of the two leading players shows both are financially robust. Smart's parent, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., turned in a record-breaking P25.2 billion in net income last year. Globe's net income reached a not inconsiderable P11.3 billion.

But do these numbers necessarily mean that both Smart and Globe are overcharging their customers?

Rate base

Unlike power utilities, phone companies are no longer required by law to maintain a 12 percent return-on-rate-base ceiling. The requirement was scrapped by the Telecommunications Act of 1995.

The RORB is a measure often used in the utilities industry to determine whether a rate increase petition is justified. The ceiling is a reminder that a utility is also a public service.

But Edgardo Cabarios, a director of the NTC, said that while the Telecommunications Act may have liberalized pricing for value-added services like text messaging, it retained the NTC's regulatory power over tariff increases on calls.

These days, however, determining the right tariff is no longer computed based on the RORB, but on a "fair and reasonable rate of return."

Froilan Castelo, an assistant vice president at Globe, told the Inquirer that even if the 12 percent RORB formula were applied, the joint venture of Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom would still be below the ceiling.

Globe's asset base of P138.12 billion as of end-2004 against its net profit of P11.3 billion would give it a return of about 8 percent.

PLDT could claim the same thing. As of end-2004, its asset base stood at P265 billion. Against profits of P25.17 billion last year, its RORB is just at 9.5 percent.

But if earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (the so-called Ebitda) were used, the two leading firms' return on assets would be staggering.

With an Ebitda of P33.04 billion, Globe's return last year would be almost 24 percent. PLDT's, with P70.4 billion, would be around 26.5 percent.

Lowered prices

Cabarios noted that the law gave the NTC residual powers to regulate even the so-called value-added services liberalized by the 1995 law.

But fortunately, he added, competition did what no law nor regulator could do, which was to bring down prices.

Through the years, the price of cellular phone calls have fallen dramatically, from P12 per minute when it was first offered during the early 1990s to as low as P7.50 for inter-network calls today.

"In the earlier days, only the rich [could] afford a cellular phone. Then because of investments and innovations, mobile services became available to more and more people. Naturally, the rates have [had] to adjust to suit different types of consumers," Castelo said.

Lawyer Rogelio Quevedo, Smart's head of legal services, noted that contrary to allegations that local players were charging too much, the cost of text messaging in the Philippines is actually one of the cheapest in the world, at P1 or less than 2 US cents per message.

In other countries, he said, sending a text message would cost anywhere between 4 to 11 US cents or roughly P2.2 to P6 each.

In voice calls, local mobile rates are also very competitive, NTC chair Ronald Solis said. He noted that in other countries, a one-minute call could range between 6 to 18 US cents or roughly P3.30 to P9.90. (In the United States, however, some carriers are already offering unlimited within-network calls for $10.)

Here, wireless calls within networks are charged an average of P5.50 to P6.50 per minute and calls to other operators about P7.50 per minute.

Due credit

PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan said credit should in fact go to the older wireless players—Smart and Globe—for having developed the mobile phone market.

Indeed, the competition between the two giants has turned telecom services into one of the driving forces of the local economy, creating hundreds of thousands of opportunities even for ordinary people to make money and spend.

Last year, for instance, Filipinos spent more than P200 billion on transport and telecom expenses alone, compared to about P155 billion in 2003. Granted, transport fares have gone up, which partly accounted for the higher spending, but so have the profits of PLDT and Globe.

Executives at both companies have frequently pointed out that substantial profits are a function of substantial investments.

Both companies have spent more than P15 billion a year in the last several years to grow their respective network and bring it to its current capacity and reach.

This has allowed the telcos to develop products that are more convenient for subscribers to load credit, for instance. The electronic loading scheme has reportedly provided more than a million jobs to micro entrepreneurs, particularly in the provinces.

"Kung hindi ka kumikita, paano ka mag-iinvest, paano ka mag-iinovate [If you're not earning, how can you invest, how can you innovate?]," asked Pangilinan.

"Globe and Smart have really delivered the kind of products (the market needed) and stimulated the demand for these products," said the telecom executive.

Indeed, the two giants have created more and more ways to use the mobile phone for a lot of things. The cellular phone has evolved into a virtual wallet that can, among others, send and accept overseas and local remittances.

Asked whether the older players could have been overcharging the market in exchange for the innovations, Pangilinan said: "If we have, then we would not have grown the market the way it has grown."

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 16, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	30	30	29.5	30	1,763,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57.5	57.5	57.5	57.5	124,900
China Banking Corp.	685	685	685	685	40
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	49	49.5	49	49.5	45,600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.85	0.86	0.85	0.85	3,140,000
International Exch. Bank	19	19	19	19	125,300
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	37	37.5	37	37.5	535,600
Philippine National Bank	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	6,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	10,000
Security Bank Corp.	31	31	31	31	150,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	33	33	32.5	32.5	9,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Abacus Financial	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	400,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2500	2560	2500	2555	1,500
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	107,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1715	1715	1715	1715	440
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	17	17.25	17	17.25	55,500
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.34	1.36	1.32	1.34	2,839,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	905	910	905	905	143,620
Ipeople Inc.	5.4	5.4	5.1	5.1	399,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	4,300,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	1,400,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	180,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	20,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.65	3.65	3.55	3.6	4,376,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1460	1485	1460	1480	118,180
Ivantage Corp.	0.77	0.78	0.77	0.78	770,000
Philweb Corp.	0.022	0.023	0.022	0.023	143,800,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	91,900
Manila Electric Co. B	30	30	29	29	1,090,400
Petron Corp.	4.15	4.25	4	4.05	7,323,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.64	1.64	1.54	1.56	2,406,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.82	1.82	60,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	8.3	8.4	8.2	8.2	420,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.06	1.12	1.06	1.1	3,834,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.69	0.69	560,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.05	4.1	4.05	4.05	4,454,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	6,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	116,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	36.5	36.5	36.5	36.5	800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	29	28	28	78,600
Pancake House Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	90,000
RFM Corp.	1	1	0.99	0.99	4,014,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	50,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56	56.5	56	56.5	117,600
San Miguel Corp. B	82.5	82.5	82.5	82.5	75,800
Universal Robina Corp.	12	12	12	12	9,900
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	284,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	14,400,000
Ayala Corp.	8.1	8.1	8	8	5,649,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.66	0.69	0.66	0.67	510,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.2	5.4	5.2	5.3	2,823,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	2,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0525	0.055	0.0525	0.0525	6,800,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.32	2.32	2.3	2.3	680,000
APC Group Inc.	0.47	0.5	0.47	0.47	2,690,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.45	150,000
Aries Prima Res. Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	1,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	30,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	140,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	26	26.5	26	26.5	118,100
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.205	0.21	0.2	0.2	5,300,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.22	1.26	15,354,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	1	1	1	1	660,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	400,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	3,000,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	100,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.2	4.15	4.2	505,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.06	0.0575	0.0575	6,500,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	72,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	60	60	59	59.5	340,900
Global Equities Inc.	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.13	3,820,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.92	1.92	1.86	1.86	711,000
Ionics Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	34,000
J.G. Summit Holdings, Inc.	4	4	4	4	141,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.24	2.32	2.16	2.16	160,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.64	1.64	4,586,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	80,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	22,610,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.36	0.37	0.36	0.36	760,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.41	0.42	0.4	0.4	820,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	350,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	430,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.78	0.81	0.78	0.78	970,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	10,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4.05	4.1	4	4.05	58,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	1,480,000
Vivant Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	60,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.36	0.37	0.36	0.36	1,460,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	54,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	1,350,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.58	1.62	1.56	1.56	4,875,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.16	1.18	1.14	1.14	831,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.62	1.64	1.62	1.62	2,942,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.35	0.35	1,830,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	17	17	17	17	38,900
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,200
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,500
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.3	9.3	9	9.1	5,996,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.41	0.41	210,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.66	1.68	1.66	1.68	10,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.14	1.04	1.08	69,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.33	6,730,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	3,150,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.56	4,410,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.9	1.92	1.88	1.9	2,372,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	420,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	10,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	140,000
Primex Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	30,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.5	4.95	4.5	4.9	1,034,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,980,000
SM Development Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.8	1.8	630,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.4	8.4	1,970,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	20,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	12,500,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.1	6.4	6.1	6.2	228,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	24,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	2,740,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.43	0.44	0.42	0.42	10,370,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	21,100,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.028	0.027	0.028	100,100,000
Omico Corp.	0.009	0.0095	0.009	0.009	360,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.22	3,715,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.46	1.54	1.46	1.52	22,396,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	45	45	43.5	44	1,335,800
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	260,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	500,000
Interport Res.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	10,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	10,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	33,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	75,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	30,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.4	0.44	0.39	0.39	750,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3	3	2.9	2.9	33,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.22	6,310,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.39	0.41	0.39	0.4	420,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	6,419,180	97,311,450.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	584,388,900	602,459,565.00
PRO	29,461,000	88,621,360.00
Mining	534,788,800	111,447,680.00
OIL	136,043,000	2,899,700.00
GRAND TOTALS :	1,291,100,880	902,739,755.00
	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	630.89	UP 0.62
Comm'l & Ind'l	3,263.05	DOWN 6.01
PRO	830.07	DOWN 17.58
Mining	3,463.48	UP 39.85
OIL	2.91	DOWN 0.04
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	1,221.34	UP 5.21
Composite	2,099.12	DOWN 7.19

NO. OF ADVANCES: 25, NO. OF DECLINES: 54, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 60, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 139, NO. OF TRADES: 3,415

February payments

From page B1

BOP over the next months, especially with the country's delisting from the watchlist of "uncooperative" countries by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force against money laundering.

"The removal by FATF will make the OFW remittance process less cumbersome, so the cost will also go down," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said earlier.

OFW inflows are also seen to rise due to the increase in the deployment of overseas workers, better quality of overseas workers and the improved efficiency of the remittance system.

Meantime, the country's gross international reserves climbed to a nine-month high of $16.48 billion in February, 4.6 percent higher than the $15.75 billion a month ago and the $15.73 billion in the same month last year.

The GIR, consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments, is seen as an indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy.

Losses would mean closure, GOCCs warned

By Michelle V. Remo

FINANCE Secretary Cesar Purisima yesterday warned losing state-owned companies that they risk closure if they do not shape up their finances.

"GOCCs (government-owned and -controlled corporations) are not incorporated to incur a loss," Purisima said in a speech before members of the Finance Executives of the Philippines (Finex) during its membership meeting yesterday.

Purisima, who said he considers himself the chief financial officer of GOCCs and government financial institutions, said a new management system has to be employed to instill fiscal discipline in losing GOCCs and GFIs.

Under the system, each GOCC and GFI will be given revenue targets, and that its performance will be the basis for incentives or penalties.

Purisima has sought the help of Finex in the development of the scorecard system.

He said that losing companies that would fail to improve their financial performance would be shut down.

Purisima said he recently met with officials of a losing GOCC, which posted P13 billion in losses last year, and told them that its expected P18 billion in losses this year was not acceptable.

"If that will be the case, I will recommend that it be dissolved. It would be better if it is closed down, and then the government can just give the P18 billion to the Filipino people," Purisima said.

He declined to identify the GOCC.

But according to latest government data, the top losing corporations include National Power Corp., which is already under the government's privatization program, the National Food Authority and the Light Rail Transit Authority.

Other GOCCs that face possible consolidation include the National Housing Authority (NHA), National Food Authority (NFA), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA), Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC), Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PIC), National Development Corp. (NDC), National Irrigation Administration (NIA), National Home Mortgage Finance Corp. (NHMFC), Philippine Television Network Inc. (PTV-4), National Tobacco Administration (NTA), Human Settlement Development Corp. (HSDC), Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC), Philippine National Railways (PNR) and the Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines.

The finance chief noted that in 2004, the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) stood at P263 billion, and that GOCCs accounted for about P80 billion.

Earlier, the Senate called for an investigation of the way officials managed the finances of GOCCs.

PIC to put up 2 vital airports for tourism

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE Infrastructure Corp. has expanded its portfolio to include two airport projects that are expected to prop up the tourism industry, Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos yesterday said.

Santos yesterday told members of the Management Association of the Philippines and the Makati Business Club at the Makati Shangri-la Hotel that infrastructure development was one of the priorities of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Officials have said that the PIC, a subsidiary of the National Development Corp., has lined up several road and tollways projects as part of a P100-billion project portfolio.

Also, the PIC has in the pipeline the establishment of a chain of cold-storage and food terminals across the nation.

Yesterday, Santos said PIC was also working on the P200-million upgrade of the Busuanga airport in Palawan, and the long-standing plan to put up the Laguindingan airport in northern Mindanao.

"Of all the PIC projects lined up so far, the Busuanga upgrade may be the first to be carried out, considering that it requires relatively small funding," he said.

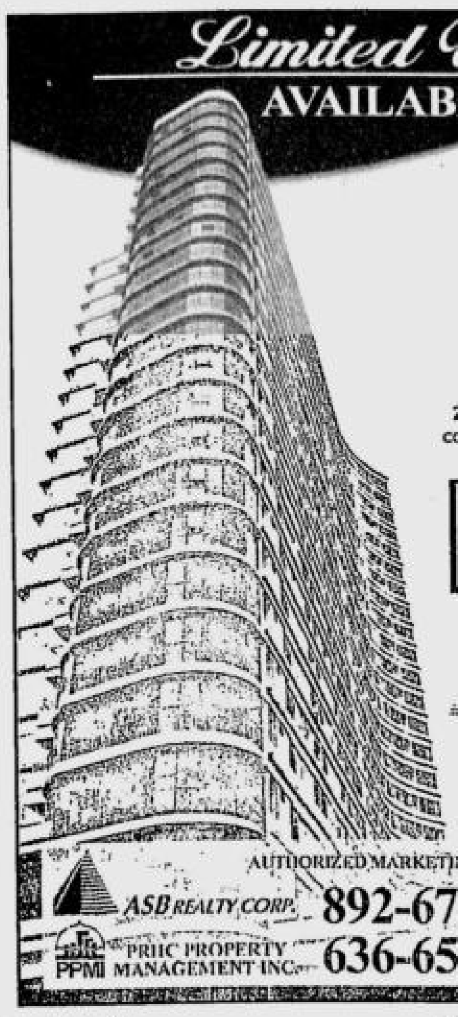
The upgrade would involve the expansion of the runway to enable the airport to accommodate larger aircraft like the Airbus 300, Santos explained.

As for Laguindingan, Santos said the government was in talks with the Ayala group, "which owns all the property covered under the plan."

"We have asked (the Ayala group) to look into the viability of this project," he added. "This has been proposed about a decade ago."

As for the tollways, Santos said PIC was taking steps to have the P10-billion Southern Luzon Expressway enhancement project finally start.

Further, PIC has set its sights on a P1.2-billion chain of cold-storage and food terminal facilities that would improve food production and harvesting across the country.



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Editor Aries Espinosa

Isuzu SEE Tech hype kicks off

WITH the new Isuzu global thrust to develop environmentally sound products, Isuzu Philippines Corporation brings in the "Isuzu SEE Technology" Campaign which will officially kick off this March. Capitalizing on this concept in staging a full-scale marketing activity, the campaign aims to create hype on the superiority of Isuzu's Direct Injection Diesel Engines and the drive for safety, economy, and environment-friendliness (SEE).

To communicate the core message of the Isuzu SEE Technology Campaign, IPC will spearhead exciting activities to manifest the safety, economy and environment aspects of the drive.

To give details on the thrusts of the entire campaign, Isuzu shall be visiting major Metro malls from March till May. Starting off on March 11 to 13, a SEE Technology Campaign display will be lodged at the Central Plaza of Market! Market! in Taguig. Featuring a cut-up D-MAX in the display, representatives from IPC and select dealer executives will be entertaining inquiries on SEE Technology Campaign, its roster of activities, and the latest in Isuzu's product lineup.

Succeeding displays are slated on April 15-17 in Alabang Town Center; April 25-30 in Glorietta Edsa Node; and May 6-8 in Eastwood City Walk.

The Isuzu SEE Technology Campaign shall spread the fever with its series of stickering gigs in select Caltex stations for the month of March. Giving away instant freebies to motorists who'll put the exclusive "I SEE Technology" bumper sticker on their vehicles, the stickering shall also hand out Isuzu and Caltex premium items for lucky spotted winners, which shall happen on separate dates. The last spotting day shall guarantee two winners with cold P30,000 cash prize.

The hunt is on for the best Isuzu SEE Technology cheerleading stunt with the Inter-Collegiate Cheerleading competition. Seventeen (17) leading Metro universities shall compete and bid for the P100,000 pot money that will go to the best SEE Tech cheer.

Eliminations will take place on April 15 and 16 in EAC Sports and Cultural Center. The finals will be on May 7 in Market! Market!. The entire SEE Technology Campaign is brought in part by Caltex Power Diesel and Delo Sports.

SIM RECEIVES $10,000 GRANT FROM SIA

For the second consecutive year, Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong (SIM) received a $10,000 grant from Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) for its program called 'Sama-Samang Pag-aaral Para sa Kaunlaran at Pangangasiwa' (Participatory Project Development and Management). The program helps women become productive and self-reliant by offering job and skill training courses. To carry out the project, club members identify beneficiaries, asses needs, screen participants, and forge agreements with trainers to provide skill-building courses in sewing, cosmetology, reflexology, meat processing and food preparation. Trainers are from the club's partners like Kapatiran Kaunlaran Foundation Inc, Manpower Development of Mandaluyong, Tesda and Home Economics teachers. The courses taught by professionals range from basic to advance levels and last three to six months. Once participants graduate from the program, club members help them find employment by recommending them to local businesses and lending them money to buy necessary tools and materials to start their own small business. So far, the club has offered 20 classes in various communities and has trained more than 500 women. SIA program council member and club past president Ruth Flores is the over-all coordinator of the program while implementation is handled by president Becky Sunga. Shown are Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong members led by president Becky Sunga supervising a food preparation course in Mandaluyong designed to teach women skills that would enable them to get employment.

St. John Bosco Parish Fund Drive

IN LINE with the Parish's mission "to provide meaningful celebrations and prayer", the St. John Bosco Parish of Santa Rosa, Laguna has recently launched a project to expand the church premises. This will accommodate and better serve the parishioners of this fast growing community. To raise the P2.45 million needed for the church expansion, the parish, under the leadership of Father Ernie Cruz, has launched "Project 2-4-5." It hopes to complete the project in four months by raising funds in five ways: 1. Through a second collection during all the masses; 2. "Barya sa Alkansiya para sa parokya" Project; 3. 1st Don Bosco Parish Sta. Rosa Golf Tournament to be held on March 18, at the Canlubang Golf Course; 4. Grand Bingo Social on April 9; 5. Donations and pledges. The Parish is appealing to sponsors and generous donors to support this project. They may contact the parish secretariat at: 02 6700 1891 or 049-5408026 for more details.

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Caring for the aging Filipino male with PhiSSAM

THE PHILIPPINES like most developing counties, is in a stage of transition in terms of socio-economic development, demographic, epidemiology, and life expectancy. It has an estimated 80 million population, of which 5.4 percent or roughly 4.32 million are aged 60 years and over. Because there are limited access and provisions for the healthcare, specifically for the elderly, the medical community has put it upon itself to help address the needs of the elderly population. There are several societies for the different medical specialties. In the year 2000, a multi-disciplinary society that focuses on the care of the aging male was formed.

The Philippine Society for the Study of the Aging Male Foundation, Inc (PhiSSAM), the local affiliate society of ISSAM (International Society of for the Study of the Aging Male), has as its general purposes the following: To project and identify the most important issues that affect

both 'Life Expectancy' and 'Health Expectancy' of the aging male; To promote awareness of men's health concerns and problems to both physicians and the lay public; To help in the promotion of healthy aging, prevention and/or reduction of morbidity and disability of the elderly so as to allow men to age with dignity and good health; and To promote a holistic approach to the management of the aging male.

PhiSSAM is composed of specialists from the fields of urology, endocrinology, rheumatology, orthopedics, gynecology, psychiatry and geriatric medicine. It is currently headed by Dr. Jose Albert C. Reyes III (Urologist at St. Luke's Hospital) as President.

The other officers are: Dr. Delfin Tan (Ob-Gyne) - Vice President; Dr. Joselynna A. Quimpo (Endocrinologist) - Secretary; Dr. Joan T. Garcia (Ob-Gyne) - Treasurer; and Dr. Lester Garcia (Urologist) - PRO. The Board of Trustees includes Drs. Mary Anne L. Abraham (Endocrinologist); Florante P. Gonzaga (Ob-Gyne); Miles T. dela Rosa (Orthopedist); and Tito Torralba (Rheumatologist).

PhiSSAM is staging a national convention for all member specialists at the Garden Ball room, Edsa Shangri-la Hotel, Mandaluyong City on April 1.

On March 31, PhiSSAM will be holding a lay forum with the theme "Advancing Men's Health" at Megamall Megatrade Hall A&B at 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Registration is free and snacks will be served at no cost. Since seats are limited to only 300 attendees it will be on a "first come, firs serve" basis. RSVP 723-1075 - Mylene; 721-1534 - Jackie; 7231086 - Shirley.

Courtesy of Boie-Takeda Chemicals Inc, a corporate member and strong supporter of PhiSSAM.

SKY FREIGHT PASSES PEZA REGISTRATION

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) approved the registration of Sky Freight Distribution Center Inc (SFDCI) as an Ecozone Facilities Enterprise at the FTI-Special Economic Zone in Taguig City recently. Photo shows Peza director general Lilia de Lima (center) handing over the certificate of registration to consul Eduardo De Guzman (2nd from left), chair and president of SFDCI. Also in photo are (from left) Manny Arnaldo, SFDCI-VP for finance, Leonardo Tanlu, SFDCI-SVP and Eduardo De Guzman, EVP.

TB CONTROL IN FILIPINO CHILDREN (DOTS IN CHILDREN)

A TB control program for Filipino children spearheaded by the Philippine Ambulatory Pediatric Association Inc (Papa) was recently presented in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. The program dealt with an over-all anti TB campaign and is entitled 'A Community-based TB control program in children in Santa Rosa, Laguna'. With this program, a diagnosis-treatment protocol for TB in children will hopefully be in place nationwide. This is a joint undertaking of the city government of Santa Rosa, the Department of Health, Philippine Ambulatory Pediatric Association Inc, Pediatrica Inc, POTTS Foundation, Rotary Centro of Santa Rosa and Santa Rosa Medical Society. Shown in photo are: Dr. Rosario Cunanan, Dr. Jocelyn Yambao-Franco, Dr. Mutya San Agustin, Dr. Rosalia Buzon, Dr. Amelia Fernandez and Dennis Uy of Pediatrica.

CHIC WAY TO CELEBRATE SPRING

Inspired by her childhood and trips to Europe, working girl Chiqui Rodriguez has finally taken painting seriously. Her first solo exhibit simply called 'Chic' merges vintage strokes during the impressionist and realist era, with a twist of modernism. Chiqui's travels to Europe allowed her to soak up in the culture and the nonchalant elegance of literature and architecture. That and her inherent love for the arts resulted in 20 acrylic paintings now on exhibit at Starbucks Coffee 6750, Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Chiqui mixes corporate and arts to spice up her living. She worked as an analyst for two major financial institutions in the country. Currently, she is connected with an IT company. The collection is on show until March 20.

BITS & Clips

Postgrad course set

THE SANTO Tomas University Hospital Department of Dermatology will be holding its annual postgraduate course with the theme, "Focus: Medical Dermatology," on March 17 and 18, at the CME Auditorium, St. Martin de Porres Building (Medicine Building), UST Campus. Several prominent doctors from various fields will be sharing their clinical expertise. For inquiries, contact 731-9356 between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Bosconians hold GA

THE MEMBERS of the Bosconian International Chamber of Commerce Inc (BICC) will gather once again for the First Quarter 2005 General Membership Assembly on March 18 at the Valle Verde Country Club in Pasig City. Finance Secretary Cesar V. Purisima is the guest of honor and speaker. Registration starts at 5:30 p.m. The affair will also be a Testimonial Dinner to honor BSP Governor-Designate Amando M. Tetangco, Jr. who is a Salesian past pupil having graduated top of his class in 1969 in Don Bosco Pampanga and a member of the BICC Board of Trustees. Tickets are priced at P500 per person at the BICC Secretariat office, Don Bosco Technical College, Mandaluyong City with tel. no. 534-3481.

Photo contest winners

THE ASIA Rice Foundation recently announced the winners of the "Rice is Life" photo contest. Cicero P. S. Villanueva's "Best of Times" depicts a grandmother and granddaughter removing impurity from the rice grains before cooking -- a nostalgic activity. Reynaldo C. Mondez "Magtanim ay Di Biro" shows a farmer distributing rice seedlings for transplanting in the field -- a backbreaking activity. Introduction of direct seeding technology can eliminate this hard work.

Ayala Westgrove Heights hosts workshops for kids

SUMMER excitement kicks off at Ayala Westgrove Heights, as a series of free, fun and worthwhile workshops for children bring out and develop their creativity and imagination further. On March 20, kids ages 7 to 14 are invited to attend the first special summer event at the Ayala Westgrove Heights Main Clubhouse, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Palm Sunday mass will be celebrated at 9 a.m., also at the Main Clubhouse. For further information on this event, call Giso Sulit at 841-5518, or Lala Nadal at 759-4225. For information about the prime subdivision amidst the hills and groves, call 848-5000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph,

SERYE RESTAURANT OPENS IN FESTIVAL MALL

The honorable Mayor of Muntinlupa, Mayor Jaime Fresnedi (center) cuts the ribbon at the recent opening of the Serye Restaurant & Café at the Festival Mall in Alabang. With him are the owners Gerard Recto, Myria M. Bajar, Mark Ancierto and Serye's general manager Alvin Lim. Serye Restaurant & Café serves the best in Filipino favorite dishes such as Boneless Crispy Pata, Barbeque Chicken and much more. Serye Restaurant & Café is located at the Festival Walk 2, Festival Mall, Alabang. For reservations and delivery, call 850-3759/850-3734.

Product FILES

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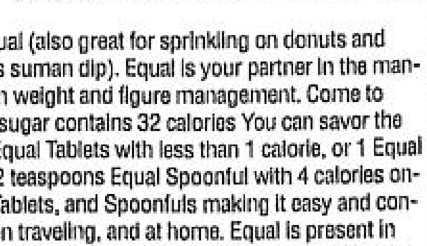

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DTI Undersecretary Elmer Hernandez delivered a message.

Holcim ExCom member Tom Clough officially endorsed the brand change.

Guest speakers Napoleon Abueva (2nd from left) and Margarita Moran - Floirendo (2nd from right) flanked by Holcim Philippines Chairman Oscar Hilado (right) and Mrs. Hilado (left).

The Holcim Philippines Management Committee provided the climactic ending to the formal launch at the NBC Tent.

A light moment with (left to right) Fr. Columbano Adag of the Monastery of the Transfiguration, Napoleon Abueva, Dom Martin Gomez, and William Sumalinog, Regional Sales Officer for Vis-Min of Holcim Philippines.

Tom Clough (left) with Lito Madrasto, President of the Philippine Contractors Association.

Ramon del Rosario, Jr. and Jose Cuisia, Directors of Holcim Philippines.

Holcim Philippines welcomes the future

A series of nine events – for internal and external stakeholders - held in all regions where the company operates marks the brand change in the Philippines. It also paid tribute to the founders of the company and affirmed the company's commitment to performance and a stronger future.

Main launch event

Holcim Philippines, Inc. was formally launched at the NBC Tent, The Fort, Global City, Taguig, Metro Manila last January 20, 2005.

Considered as the centerpiece of a series of nine events held in four plants across the country, the launch put together a wide array of the company's major corporate stakeholders in one big event.

With the launch, Union Cement officially changed its name to Holcim Philippines, Inc., bringing together the advantages of a global brand and the strength of a local presence. Holcim Philippines thereby renewed its commitment to performance, to consistent products, to customer service, to the environment, to the communities, and to its shareholders. One of the highlights of the launch was the tribute to the founders of both Union Cement and Alsons Cement who have been instrumental in guiding the company and in laying the foundations to be the leading cement company in the Philippines.

Guest speaker DTI Undersecretary Elmer Hernandez, representing former DTI Secretary Cesar Purisima, talked about the history and commitment of Holcim Philippines to providing foundations for society's future. Former Miss Universe and community leader Margarita Moran-Floirendo affirmed her advocacy for community development through her role in Habitat, and spoke of the support being given by Holcim Philippines. National Artist Napoleon Abueva spoke of his romance with and passion for cement, and how Holcim Philippines provides indestructible substance to the dreams and inspirations of Filipino artists.

The event also showcased a musical montage billed as "Pathways of Tomorrow".

Capturing diverse qualities and cultures

The launch was replicated at the Holcim plants in La Union , Bulacan, Misamis Oriental, and Davao. Two launch events were held in each area of operation: an internal event for employees and their spousesat the plant, followed by an external launch at an outside venue.

Notable personalities from the local communities were invited as guest speakers for the external launches. Internal launches offered fun and games, and entertainment for employees and their families.

Motorcades during the day and fireworks at night added color and a festive atmosphere to the plant events.

Gov. Victor Ortega was main guest speaker at the La Union launch.

COO Paul O'Callaghan with guest speaker, film maker Kidlat Tahimik (Eric de Guia) at the La Union event.

Rep. Lorna Silverio, guest speaker at the Bulacan launch, is welcomed by Holcim Philippines COO Paul O'Callaghan, SVP-Mfg.Alex Vonow, Pres. Magdaleno Albarracin, and Bulacan HR Manager Gene Sumbillo.

Vice Mayor Louie Bonguyan (extreme right) with, from left, Boyet Pecson VP-AFR, Pres. Magdaleno Albarracin, Martin Binz, Deputy to the Swiss Ambassador, SVP-Manufacturing Alex Vonow and Mrs. Vonow. The Vice Mayor delivered Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's speech at the Davao launch.

Misamis Oriental Gov Oscar Moreno (left) & former PBA stalwart Jojo Lastimosa (right), pride of Cagayan de Oro, were guest speakers at the Misamis Oriental launch.

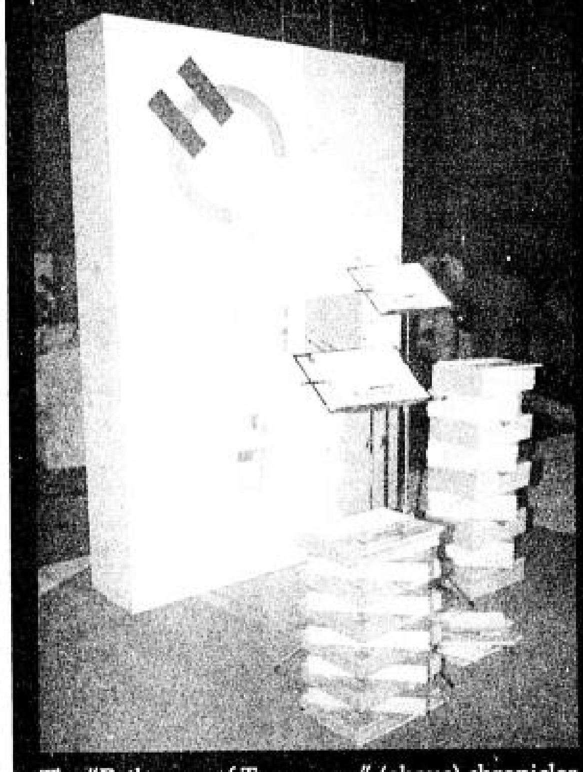
Motorcades announced the internal launch in all locations.

"Pathways of Tomorrow"

"Pathways of Tomorrow" was the main theme of all the launch events. It is also the title of the company's "spirit book" which embodies the brand values that the company strives for: Presence, Relevance, Simplicity, Innovation, Accessibility, Determination, and Responsibility.

Seven stories exemplifying the seven brand values of Holcim were related via a musical montage performed by professional stage actors and actresses from Stages, Inc. One story in particular presented the 2003 Henyo Awardees of the Company as examples for Innovation.

The musical montage was a performance that captured the fancy of the guests and further presented the strength, performance, and passion of Holcim Philippines.



The "Pathways of Tomorrow" (above) chronicles the stories of our stakeholders from Batanes to Jolo, including Benguet sari-sari store owner Rosemarie Adiar Bay -An (below left) and 2003 Henyo Awardees from our Davao plant (below right). At bottom are cast members of "Pathways of Tomorrow".

Plant employees proudly wear the Holcim colors.

Carlo Orosa (left) was emcee for all events. Plant employees had a fun time with celebrity performers Agot Isidro and Christian Bautista who entertained all internal events audiences.

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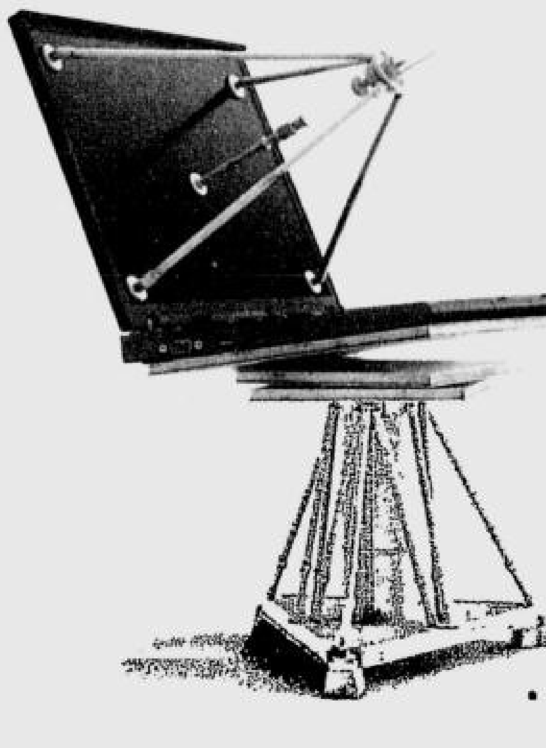

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Saudi Arabia demands Opec boost output

ISFAHAN, Iran—Opec kingpin Saudi Arabia signaled Tuesday it could act alone to meet a predicted increase in demand for oil, as it pushed hesitant fellow members of the cartel to raise production quotas immediately.

"Uppermost in our mind is to satisfy the demand that is out there," Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Nuaimi told reporters, after predicting "a substantial rise (in demand) between the third and fourth quarter to the tune of two plus million" barrels per day (bpd).

When asked if the kingdom would act alone, he replied: "We have done many things in the past. We will do what we have to do."

Opec ministers are to meet in this central Iranian oasis and ancient Persian capital on Wednesday to consider the Saudi demand that it raise its production ceiling of 27 million bpd by 500,000.

Kuwaiti Energy Minister and Opec President Sheikh Ahmad Fahd al-Sabah said the grouping—which produces around 40 percent of the world's crude—would raise its member quotas but had yet to decide on the timing.

Opec's key advisory committee proposed a compromise, recommending that the cartel raise its ceiling by 500,000 bpd if prices stay high through April, a source close to the talks said.

"The recommendation ... is that Opec will continue to monitor the markets, to continue to monitor the price developments through April. If prices remain at current levels we may increase the ceiling by 500,000 (bpd) with effect May 1," the official said.

World oil prices fell Tuesday following the Saudi call.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in April, dropped 32 cents to $54.63 a barrel in early afternoon deals, reversing initial gains.

In London, the price of Brent North Sea crude oil for delivery in April fell 6 cents to $53.60 a barrel, also after early winnings. *AFP*

US retail sales rise

WASHINGTON—US retail sales rose in February, boosting expectations for first-quarter growth, while foreigners in January still believed the United States was a good place to invest, two reports on Tuesday showed.

Healthy consumer spending drove retail sales up 0.5 percent last month, the Commerce Department said.

While that was slightly below forecasts for a 0.6 percent gain, analysts said a revision in January to a 0.3 percent rise from a 0.3 percent drop made up for the disappointment.

"You have to weigh in the big January revisions. We are doing pretty darn good. It's pretty well spread. Consumers are spending their little hearts out," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's Ratings Services in New York.

The retail strength prompted many analysts to bump up expectations for consumer spending in the first three months of 2005—which in turn boosts expectations for robust gains in gross domestic product this quarter.

Economists now predict growth in consumer spending at an annual rate of between 3.5 percent and 4.0 percent in the first quarter, slowing only slightly from 4.2 percent growth in the fourth quarter.

Healthy consumer appetites also reinforced expectations the Federal Reserve will continue to raise borrowing costs in the months ahead, building on six consecutive interest rate increases since June.

"The Federal Reserve's measured rate hike intentions are well validated by the consumer evidence," said Stephen Gallagher, economist at SG Economic Research.

A separate report by the Treasury Department showed net capital inflows surged to a larger-than-expected $91.5 billion in January, the second biggest inflow on record and more than enough to finance the nation's current account deficit.

Currency analysts had forecast a net inflow into US assets in a range between $55 billion and $75 billion for January, and the dollar gained broadly on the upside surprise.

"Clearly, the US is still seen as an attractive place to invest, despite the concerns over the dollar," said Sherry Cooper, chief economist at BMO Nesbitt Burns.

Financial market participants watch the report as a measure of foreigners' appetite for US assets.

Reuters

Most Asian marts down

SINGAPORE—Crude oil prices eased from near-record levels ahead of an Opec meeting on Wednesday, while a decline in semiconductor stocks such as Japan's NEC Electronics Corp. kept most Asian share markets flat to lower.

Some technology stocks were hurt by a Merrill Lynch research note citing limited growth opportunities for semiconductor firms and after Applied Materials said China was slowing its chip purchases. Those two factors helped send the sector lower in New York.

Japan's Nikkei stock index ended the morning session down 0.15 percent at 11,803.84.

MSCI's index of non-Japan shares edged 0.11 percent higher, led by modest rises in the health care and financial sectors.

Despite the slight pullback in oil prices, analysts said oil's three-week stretch above $50 a barrel was weighing on the outlook for corporate profits, particularly for manufacturers.

In Asian share markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng index fell 0.49 percent, with indices in Singapore and Taiwan flat.

Australian's benchmark S&P/ASX 200 index rose 0.57 percent on expectations for strong earnings from top banks including National Australia Bank.

South Korea's benchmark KOSPI index fell 0.55 percent on the drop in tech shares and as foreigners extended their net sales of local stocks into a 10th consecutive session.

Shares in manufacturers including Hyundai Motor Co. fell amid worries about increased energy costs.

Among active stocks, Fuji Television Network Inc. surged about 17 percent after the company, Japan's top TV broadcaster, said on Tuesday it would boost its dividend.

Stocks caught in the tech selloff included: NEC Electronics Corp., down 2.28 percent; Advantest Corp., down 0.95 percent; Samsung Electronics, down 0.5 percent; LG Electronics Inc., down 1.59 percent; and Kyocera Corp., down 1.8 percent.

Running against the trend was Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., the world's top contract chip maker, which rose 0.98 percent after losses in previous sessions.

Currency dealers were cautious ahead of US current account data later in the day. The dollar had gained strength in New York after a report showed robust foreign net purchases of US assets in January that amply offset the nation's large monthly trade deficit.

US stock indices closed near three-week lows. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 0.55 percent at 10,745.10, while the technology-laden Nasdaq Composite Index was down 0.78 percent at 2,034.98 following a Merrill Lynch note that semiconductor stocks had limited opportunity for growth.

A jury convicted former WorldCom Inc. chief executive Bernard Ebbers of all counts related to an accounting scandal that cost investors billions of dollars. He plans to appeal the verdict.

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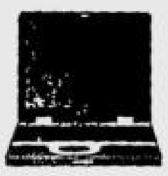

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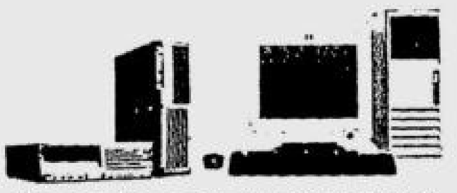

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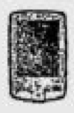

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

This is to notify that BOI cert.#74-349 of Granexport Manufacturing Corp. has been lost (PDI-March 17, 2005)

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

P.O.Box 789 Manila, Philippines
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines
Tel. 632-4231; Fax No. (632) 636-2567

INVITATION to PRE-QUALIFY for PROVISION of MESSENGER SERVICES

(Contract ADB/OAS-2005/010)

1. The Asian Development Bank ("ADB"), a multilateral development finance institution headquartered in Manila, Philippines, invites experienced interested companies to apply for pre-qualification in the bidding for messenger services at ADB Headquarters at ADB Building, No. 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines.
2. The contractor shall provide the number of fully trained personnel, including supervisory staff, required for ADB's internal and external messenger services. The scope of services is provided in detail in the Work Performance Statement to be given to interested applicants.
3. Applications for prequalification will only be entertained from companies meeting the following criteria:
    - i. Validly registered company in the Philippines, or a joint venture partnership (under joint and several liability) for at least 5 years with a trade specialization in providing internal and external messenger services;
    - ii. Have at least 2 current clients and 3 previous clients, for rendering similar scope of services as described above;
    - iii. Have average annual revenues of at least P3 million pesos over the past three 3 years from messenger services or other related business;
    - iv. Have 1 staff supervisor to be deployed under the Contract, with at least 4 years college education and a minimum 10 years experience in messenger-related services, including document distribution in a large office environment, of which 5 years are in a supervisory capacity, who will act as the Contractor's supervisor working full time as part of the team;
    - v. Have at least 20 skilled and qualified messengers to be deployed under the Contract with at least 2 years college/vocational education and a minimum of 5 years experience in messenger operation services; and at least 2 of the 20 messengers shall be licensed professional drivers, with good familiarity of Metro Manila area. All Contractor's personnel to be deployed under the Contract must be able to write and speak the English language.
4. Prequalification documents may be obtained from the Procurement and Contracts Administration Section, Institutional Services Division, Office of Administrative Services, Room 1636 South, 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines, from **16–22 March 2005** on any working day (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), or call 632-4231 or 632-4452; fax number (632) 636 -2567, email address: dmunoz@adb.org .
5. Invitation to bid will be issued to pre-qualified applicants who pass the minimum prequalification criteria and evaluated as pre-qualified by considering the evaluation criteria.
6. Only pre-qualified companies will be contacted and issued bidding documents. ADB reserves the right to accept or reject any application for prequalification, and to postpone issuance of bidding documents.
7. This invitation does not entail any commitment on the part of ADB, either financial or otherwise. Any cost of preparation of the application for prequalification shall be borne solely by the applicant.

Chairperson
Institutional Procurement Committee
Office of Administrative Services

(PDI–March 16 & 17, 2005)

Asian Development Bank ADB
FIGHTING POVERTY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ARMM SOCIAL FUND PROJECT

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President
Central Fund Management Office
4th Floor, Elena V. Co Building (Land Bank)
Don Rufino Alonzo Street, Cotabato City, Philippines

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTANT SERVICES)

PHILIPPINES
ARMM Social Fund Project (ASFP)
Loan No. 7153 PH
Expressions of Interest

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the ARMM Social Fund Project (ASFP) and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consultant services. The services include internal audit of the sub-projects of the ARMM Social Fund Project under the components of the Community Development Assistance (CDA) and Strategic Infrastructure (SRI). The internal audit functions will be conducted on a quarterly basis.

The Central Fund Management Office now invites eligible consultants to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc.) The Internal Audit Firm must be reputable. The audit team should be led and adequately supervised by a person with a *Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) degree* who should be discussing and singing off on the reports.

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: *Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers (2002 edition).*

Interested consultants may obtain further information at the address below during office hours from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Expressions of Interest must be delivered to the address below by March 28, 2005.

ARMM Social Fund Project (ASFP)
Attn: **Nazrullah B. Manzur**
Executive Director
4th Floor, Elena V. Co Bldg. (Land Bank), Don Rufino Alonzo Street, Cotabato City, 9600
E-mail: asfp@pldtdsl.net

(PDI – March 17, 2005)

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that stock Cert. No. 13534 issued by Union Cement Corp. for 14,599 shares of Mr. Cesar G. Saldana has been reported lost. If no contest received new cert. will be issued.
(PDI-March 10, 17, 24, 2005)

NOTICE OF LOSS
Notice is hereby given that the pair of Plate No. DEP-755 registered in the name of JOSE R. LEGASPI, was lost per Affidavit of Loss dated Feb. 8, 2005 under the Notarial Registry of Atty. Benjamin B. Tabaque as Doc. 375; Page 76; Book 289; Series of 2005
(PDI – March 17, 24 & 31, 2005)

ANNOUNCEMENT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ESTATE OF THE LATE JUANITO P. ENCINARES WAS EXTRAJUDICIALLY SETTLED AMONG HIS HEIRS AS PER DOC. NO. 356; PAGE NO. 73; BOOK NO. 81; SERIES OF 2005 UNDER NOTARY PUBLIC ATTY. PATRICIO L. BONCAYAO JR. (PDI MAR.10,17, 24, 2005)

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Contact Ms. Johanna at
359-0232
0928-6110269

WE ARE IN NEED OF:
ACCOUNTING CLERK (F)
MARKETING COORDINATOR (Male)
Contact Ms. JOHANNA at
359-0232 / 0928-6110269

FEMALE

Dressmaker, Beautician and Domestic Helper 5224435 / 09206262141

Training course on food processing

THE NATIONAL Food Authority (NFA) Food Development Center yesterday clarified that the training course on "Requirements for Good Manufacturing and Practices (GMP) in the Handling and Processing of Foods" is scheduled on April 7 from 8:00 am to 5:00 in the afternoon at the FDC Compound in the Food Terminal Complex, Taguig, City, contrary to the earlier published dates of March 13, 20, 27 and April 2.

For further details about the training course, interested parties may inquire from Ms. Amelia S. Bautista at telephone numbers 838-4015, 838-4478 or 838-4561 or send e-mail at infofdc@pacific.net.ph.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY OMBUDSMAN FOR LUZON

3rd Floor, Ombudsman Bldg., Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

(In compliance with R.A. 7041)

GRAFT INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OFFICER III, Item No. OMBA-GIPO3-23-2004; SG-28; Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: Five (5) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; Training: 24 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: RA 1080 (BAR).

GRAFT INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OFFICER I, Item Nos. OMBA-GIO1-93-1998; OMBA-GIO1-100-1998; SG-26; Education: Bachelor of Laws, Experience: Three (3) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; Training: 24 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: RA 1080 (BAR).

Interested applicants should submit applications within twenty (20) working days from the date of this publication to the Administrative Division, at the above address, the following requirements pursuant to Office Order No. 05-17:

1. A letter stating the position applied for;
2. Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3. "1x1" picture (colored);
4. Birth Certificate;
5. Bar Rating;
6. Transcript of Records;
7. Certificates of Seminars/Training attended;
8. Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable);
9. Police Clearance;
10. National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Clearance;
11. Civil Service Commission (CSC) clearance (only for applicants who are or have been government employees);
12. Results of neuro-psychiatric test administered not earlier than six months from the publication of the position; and
13. Certification under oath of the applicant as to any relative(s) of the applicant within the fourth degree of consanguinity and affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

(PDI - March 17, 2005)

LIGHT
RAIL
TRANSIT
AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

ITB No. 02-052-05

The Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) invites duly licensed security agencies to apply for eligibility and to bid for:

BUDGET FOR THE SECURITY SERVICES OF LRT LINE 1 & 2 SYSTEMS

LINE 1 AREA		BUDGET	CONTRACT PERIOD
I Depot	PHP	25,065,600.00	12 MONTHS
II Revenue Line		86,834,400.00	12 MONTHS
GRAND TOTAL	PHP	111,900,000.00	

LINE 2 AREA		BUDGET	CONTRACT PERIOD
I Depot	PHP	11,100,480.00	12 MONTHS
II Revenue Line		64,096,320.00	12 MONTHS
GRAND TOTAL	PHP	75,196,800.00	

The Bid Document forms may be secured from the LRTA Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat at the Ground Floor, Administration Bldg., LRTA Compound, Aurora Blvd., Pasay City, Metro Manila, during regular office hours from March 7 to 22, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00) per areas to be served as indicated (Line 1, AREA I, II, Line 2 AREA I, II).

Site inspection will be held on March 11 & 23, 2005 at 10:00 A.M. For the purpose of clarifying issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on April 4, 2005 at the Admin Building Conference Room 10:30 a.m. The BAC Secretariat shall received sealed bids not later than **April 21, 2005, 9:00 A.M.** and then shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

LRTA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of its bids, and will entertain only such bid/s established to be the most advantageous to the LRTA.

(Sgd.) **LT COL CESAR B CHAVEZ (GSC) MNSA**
Deputy Administrator
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–March 17, 2005)

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TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO

PD Ref. No.: PB050211-EL0010

The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE FOR HEAD OFFICE**, wishes to invite interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid on the items listed below:

Schedule	Item Description	PR NO.	Approved Budget
I	MOBILE PC	3 units	P 375,000.00
II	DESKTOP PC	20 units	P 1,700,000.00
III	LASERJET PRINTER (Standalone)	2 units	P 70,000.00
IV	LASERJET PRINTER	1 unit	P 48,000.00
V	INKJET PRINTER	1 unit	P 18,000.00
VI	SCANNER	1 unit	P 15,000.00
VII	DVD WRITER, EXTERNAL	1 unit	P 30,000.00
VIII	HARD DRIVE, EXTERNAL	1 unit	P 20,000.00
IX	SERVER	1 unit	P 300,000.00

TOTAL ABC: P 2,576,000.00

1. Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting March 17, 2005 to April 14, 2005 at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, upon payment of non-refundable fee of **Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00)** per set.
2. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before 10:00 a.m of April 15, 2005 at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. Of the date is declared non-working day, the new deadline for submission shall be announced through a Bid Bulletin. Submission of documents must be clear, legible and readable. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.
3. Pre-bid conference will be held on April 4, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
4. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
5. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
6. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO G. LABAYANI**
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI - March 17 & 23, 2005)

LIGHT
RAIL
TRANSIT
AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

ITB No. 02-051-05

The Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for:

BUDGET FOR THE JANITORIAL SERVICES OF LRT LINE 1 & 2 SYSTEMS

LINE 1 AREA		BUDGET	CONTRACT PERIOD
I Depot	PHP	8,033,921.28	12 MONTHS
II Revenue Line		17,535,023.38	12 MONTHS
III LRV's		8,767,511.64	12 MONTHS
GRAND TOTAL	PHP	34,336,456.20	

LINE 2 AREA		BUDGET	CONTRACT PERIOD
I Depot & LRV's	PHP	7,705,079.76	12 MONTHS
II Revenue Line		23,330,889.72	12 MONTHS
GRAND TOTAL	PHP	31,035,969.48	

The Bid Document forms may be secured from the LRTA Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat at the Ground Floor, Administration Bldg., LRTA Compound, Aurora Blvd., Pasay City, Metro Manila, during regular office hours from March 7 to 22, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00) per areas to be served as indicated (Line 1, AREA I, II, III, Line 2 AREA I, II).

Site inspection will be held on March 11 & 23, 2005 at 10:00 A.M. For the purpose of clarifying issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on April 4, 2005 at the Admin Building Conference Room 10:30 a.m. The BAC Secretariat shall received sealed bids not later than **April 21, 2005, 9:00 A.M.** and then shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

LRTA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of its bids, and will entertain only such bid/s established to be the most advantageous to the LRTA.

(Sgd.) **LT COL CESAR B CHAVEZ (GSC) MNSA**
Deputy Administrator
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–March17, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY
MACTAN ECONOMIC ZONE I
Lapu-lapu City
Tel. Nos. 3400590, 3400594, 3400591; Telefax No. 3402949

MEZ-2005-004
Proposed Civil Works on Lot F-1
MEZ I

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY, through its MEZ Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

Name of Contract	:	Proposed Civil Works Projects on Lot F-1
Location	:	MEZ I, Lapu-lapu City
Brief Description	:	Supply of Labor, Materials, Equipment and Supervision for Proposed Site Grading, Concrete Roadwork and Drainage System on Lot F-1 with an area of 27,000 sq. meters more or less.
Approved Budget for the Contract	:	14,800,107.13
Contract Duration	:	120 calendar days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed similar contract with a value at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and own equipment listed below available for the prosecution of the contract:

– Dump Truck	at least 3 units	capacity 20 tonnes
– Tandem Road Roller/Vibratory Roller	at least 2 units	capacity 10 tonnes up
– Road Grader	at least 1 unit	130-200 HP
– Excavator (Breaker/Backhoe)	at least 1 unit	150-200 HP
– Bulldozer	at least 1 unit	150-180 HP
– Wheel Loader	at least 1 unit	125-150 HP

The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

	BAC Activities	Schedule
1.	Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	March 17-30, 2005
2.	Issuance of Eligibility Forms	March 17-30, 2005
3.	Receipt of Eligibility Requirements Deadline	March 31, 2005, 5:00 p.m.
4.	Notice of Result of Eligibility Check	April 7, 2005
5.	Issuance of Bid Documents	April 8-11, 2005
6.	Pre-bid Conference	April 14, 2005 2:00 p.m.
7.	Receipt & Opening of Bids	April 28, 2005 2:00 p.m.

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at MEZ I BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, PEZA Administration Bldg., MEZ I, Lapu-lapu City upon submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of P100.00 to the PEZA Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P5,000.00 to the PEZA Cashier.

The PEZA assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

Approved by:
(Sgd.) **BELENIA B. LOBITAÑA**
MEZ BAC Chairperson

(PDI – March 17 & 27, 2005)

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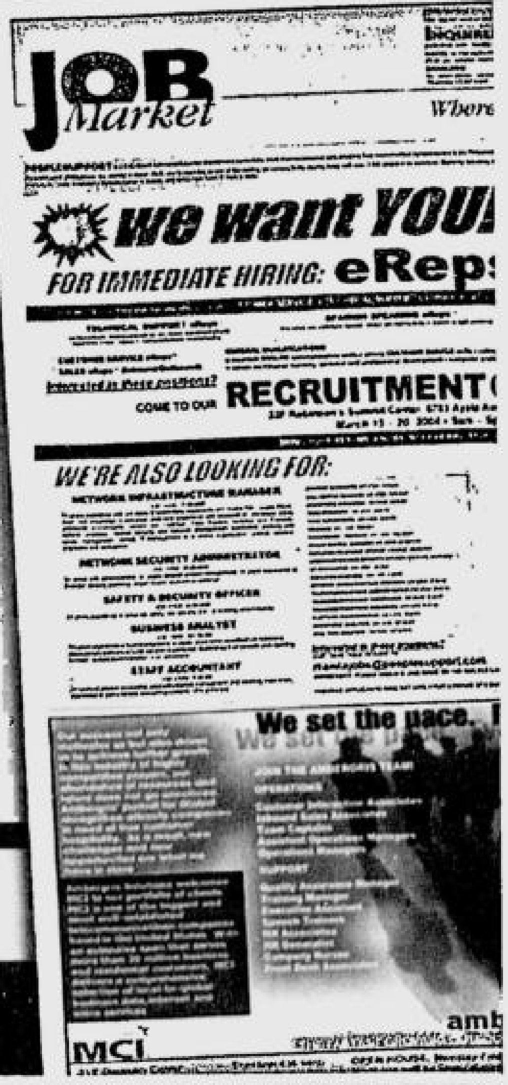

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POWER SECTOR
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation ("*PSALM*") Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee ("*Committee*") invites interested parties to participate in and bid for the privatization of the following:

Bataan Thermal Plant Equipment, Components, Auxiliaries and Accessories located at Limay, Bataan

(the "*Asset*"). The Asset is being sold on an "*as is where is*" basis.

Interested parties are required to submit a Letter of Interest ("*LOI*") to PSALM which shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax number of the interested party, name of the principal contact, and signed by an authorized representative. All LOIs must be received by PSALM at the PSALM Office, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, not later than 5:00 p.m. on March 28, 2005 (the "*LOI Submission Deadline*"). Only interested parties that submit an LOI by the LOI Submission Deadline shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

As a prerequisite to the receipt of the Bidding Package, interested parties shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement and an Undertaking pursuant to Section 78 of RA 9136, in the forms provided by PSALM, and pay a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Hundred U.S. Dollars (U.S. $ 500.00) (the "*Participation Fee*"). The Participation Fee shall either be in cash, manager's check or cashier's check. All bank charges, if any, shall be for the account of the interested party. Only interested parties that submit the Confidentiality Agreement, Undertaking and Participation Fee to PSALM on or before 5:00 p.m. on March 29, 2005 shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

The Bidding Package shall be issued during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) from March 15, 2005 until March 29, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. (the "*Deadline*") at the PSALM Office. Only interested parties who have been issued the Bidding Package will be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

The schedule of the bidding activities shall be as follows:

Due Diligence	March 22 to April 22, 2005
Pre-bid Conference	March 31, 2005
Deadline for Receipt of Bids by PSALM	April 28, 2005

A single stage two-envelope bidding system has been adopted. Other details of the privatization of the Asset are contained in the Bidding Package. References to dates and times in this notice shall be based on Manila time. Should any of the above dates fall on a holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the same time of the immediately succeeding business day in Makati City.

Interested parties will be required to post a bid security equivalent to ten percent (10%) of its total bid price in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit, confirmed by a local bank and acceptable to the Committee. The bid security of the winning bidder shall be substituted by a performance security to guarantee prompt, faithful and complete performance of its obligations under the transaction.

Letters of Interest, Confidentiality Agreements and Undertakings shall be addressed and submitted to: The Chairman, Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee, PSALM Corporation, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines. Inquiries and clarifications shall be addressed to Mr. Frolian A. Tampinco at the PSALM Office or at telephone number (632) 893-8202, fax number (632) 840-5341 or e-mail address fatampinco@psalm.gov.ph.

The Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any interested party or bidder or proposals or bids therefrom, or any part thereof, and/or to waive any defects contained therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government, without offering any reason whatsoever. It does not assume any obligation to compensate or indemnify any party for any expense or loss that they may incur as a result of their participation in the privatization process, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made. Finally, it reserves the right to modify, supplement, or change the Bidding Procedures and other aspects of the privatization process at any time, including the schedule and the venue provided herein, for any reason whatsoever and without giving prior notice. Interested parties and/or bidders will be notified subsequently of such modifications, supplements, or changes.

(Sgd.) **Vincent S. Perez Jr.**
Chairman
PSALM Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – March 15, 16 & 17, 2005)

THE HERITAGE PARK FORT BONIFACIO
Mortuary – Crematory
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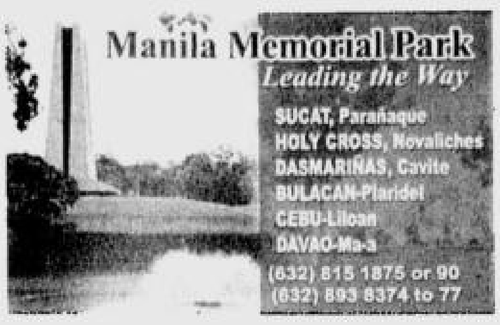
Trunk Line: (632) 845-2334 to 38
Direct Line: (632) 845-2440

OBITUARIES


Manila Memorial Park
Leading the Way
SUCAT, Parañaque
HOLY CROSS, Novaliches
DASMARIÑAS, Cavite
BULACAN-Plaridel
CEBU-Liloan
DAVAO-Ma-a
(632) 815 1875 or 90
(632) 893 8374 to 77

Our Dearly Beloved

BARTOLOME E. SAN DIEGO, SR.

Peacefully joined the Lord
on March 14, 2005 at the age of 96.

His children **Flora** and **Julian** (†) **Sison**, **Bartolome Jr.** and **Letty**, **Luis** and **Marilou** (†), **Aurora** and **Manuel Uy, Jr.**, **Rosita** and **Eduardo Lesaca**, **Victoria** and **Emmanuel Rufino**, **Arturo** and **Estrellita**, and **Antonio** and **Liz**; grandchildren and great grandchildren, relatives and friends request to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Capilla de la Virgen, San Antonio, Forbes, Makati.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 19, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City, immediately following the 2 p.m. Mass.

In Loving Memory on the
3rd Death Anniversary of

RAMON "MON" P. PEREZ

Who passed away on March 17, 2002

Holy Masses will be offered today, Thursday, March 17, 2005 at the following:

St. Michael the Archangel Parish Church-Ilijan, *Batangas City*
St. Francis de Paola Parish Church-*Mabini, Batangas*
Basilica of the Immaculate Conception-*Batangas City*
San Roque Parish Church-*Lemery, Batangas*
Our Lady of Miraculous Medal Parish-*Subic, Agoncillo Batangas*

His loving wife Susan; children Erwin, Mikko, Erika and Allen; mother Nanay Azon; relatives and friends request the pious readers to remember "AMON" in their prayers.

We, the MEMBERS and FRIENDS of the Congregation of the
MONTFORT MISSIONARIES (Company of Mary)
Recommend to your prayers the repose of the soul of our **Beloved Former Delegation Superior**

REV. FATHER ADRIANUS G.M. (ARIE) VAN DER HULST, SMM

who passed away in the Grace of Our LORD
on March 15, 2005 in Hazerswoude, The Netherlands

GOD ALONE

ARLENE DE LOS SANTOS

Peacefully died in the Grace of our Lord
on 14th March 2005.

Her mother **Mrs. Maria De Los Santos**, her sisters and brother, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Chapel-I of La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

> "...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
>
> — 2 Corinthians 5:8

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS and bank-to-bank payments

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS

In Loving Memory
on the Second Death Anniversary of

LEANDRO G. SINCO

of Foundation University
Dumaguete Rural Bank, Inc. and SG Bank
Dumaguete City

February 27, 1928 – March 17, 2003

His loving wife **Mira**, sons **Victor Vicente** and **Luis Leandro**; daughters-in-law **Dianne** and **Caroline**; grandchildren **Christopher, Patrick, Stephen, Matthew, Sunny, Andy, Carlee** and **Lulu**; siblings, in-laws, nephews and nieces request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Schedule of Masses

Daily Novena Masses
March 9, 2005 – March 16, 2005
3:30 p.m. at the University Chapel
Foundation University Main Campus
Dumaguete City

Second Death Anniversary Mass
March 17, 2005, 3:30 p.m.
Sofia Soller-Sinco Hall
Foundation University Main Campus
Dumaguete City

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

METRO MANILA

- **LAS PIÑAS**
  FUNERARIA FILIPINAS
  187 Real St., Zapote Alabang, Las Piñas; Tels. 873-0507; 873-0024
- **MAKATI**
  DON BOSCO CHAPELS
  Pasay Road, Makati City; Tel. 894-5932 to 34
  FUNERARIA FILIPINAS
  865 J.P. Rizal St., Poblacion, Makati City; Tels. 890-3556; 899-8191
  LOYOLA MEMORIAL CHAPELS
  EDSA cor. Bernardino St., Guadalupé, Makati City; Tels. 895-1011 to 19
  MALABED FUNERAL SERVICE
  3-A Coronado St., Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City; Tel. 890-63-18
  SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO PARISH
  Forbes Park, Makati City; Tel. Nos. 843-8838/30; Fax No. 843-9223
  ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGOURI PARISH
  Magallanes Village, Makati City; Tels. 852-8228; 852-7284
- **MALABON**
  FLORESCO FUNERAL HOME
  219 Gen. Luna St., Concepcion, Malabon, Metro Manila; Tels. 2812963; 2813034; 2810522
- **MANDALUYONG**
  SANTUARIO DE SAN JOSE PARISH
  East Greenhills, Mandaluyong City; Telefax 724-4139; 725-2044
- **MANILA**
  DULCE MEMORIAL SERVICES
  Jose Abad Santos Ave. cor. Dinalupihan St., Manuguit, Manila
  Tels. 712-5102; 741-5125; 741-5133; Fax No. 711-3064
  LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
  1501 C.M. Recto Ave. cor. T. Mapua, Manila; Tels. 711-6931 to 35; 732-4795; 732-2827
  POPULAR MEMORIAL CHAPELS, INC.
  2141 Rizal Ave., Sta. Cruz, Manila; Tel. Nos. 254-0867, 254-0839
  ST. MARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL
  16-15 G. Tuazon cor. Loreto St., Sampaloc, Manila; Tels. 749-3679; 781-1772
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  2028 Rizal Ave., Sta. Cruz, Manila; Tels. 493-4458; 493-4540
  WELINGTON FUNERAL SERVICES
  1511 Gen. Luna St., Paco, Manila; Tel. 302-5447
- **MARIKINA**
  ERIC SANTIAGO MEMORIAL CHAPELS
  26 Bayanbayan Ave., Concepcion I, Marikina City; Tels. 942-6044; 475-1177
  F. SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
  9 V. Gomez & 13 V. Gomez St., San Roque, Marikina City; Tels. 646-1725 or 646-1730
  LOYOLA MEMORIAL PARK CHAPELS & CREMATORY SERVICES
  Loyola Memorial Park, A. Bonifacio Avenue, Tañong, Marikina City
  Tels. 941-3196 to 98; 941-3676; Telefax 941-3577
  PAKET SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
  13 V. Gomez St., San Roque, Marikina City; Tels. 646-1725; 646-1730
- **PARAÑAQUE**
  HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPELS
  Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat Rd., Sucat, Parañaque City; Tels. 825-1296; 825-1291, Telefax: 825-1314
  LA FUNERARIA PAZ, SUCAT, INC.
  Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat, Parañaque; Tels. 820-1592; 825-9947; 825-8635
  LINCOLN MEMORIAL SERVICES, INC.
  Ground Floor, JEMP Bldg., J. Cabarrus cor. Monserrat Sts., Phase I,
  BF Commercial Center, Parañaque, Metro Manila
  RIZAL FUNERAL HOMES
  8187 Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat, Parañaque City; Tels. 826-1376; 826-9682; (0915) 712-1220
- **PASAY**
  RIZAL FUNERAL HOMES
  438 Cementina St., Pasay City; Tels. 831-1204
  VERONICA MEMORIAL HOMES
  Official NBI Morgue 517-A Arnaiz St., Pasay City; Tels. 831-3797; 844-7846; 843-1801; 845-4836
- **PASIG**
  ARLINGTON EAST-THE GARDEN CHAPELS
  C. Raymundo St. cor. Mercedes Ave., San Miguel Ave., Pasig City
  Tels. 747-8599; 747-8609 • Telefax 641-1760
  FUNERARIA ANGEL QUIOGUE
  No. 67 Pasig Boulevard Extension, Pasig City; Tels. 641-7909; 641-1735
- **QUEZON CITY**
  ARLINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL
  12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City; Tels. 715-1025; 715-1031; 715-1027
  LA FUNERARIA LAWRENCE BAQUIRAN
  #23 Pato St., Project 2, Quezon City; Tel. 434-3258
  LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
  143 G. Araneta Ave. cor. Kaliraya St., Quezon City
  Tels. 749-3806 to 11, 712-3001; 743-6502 or 05
  NACIONAL MEMORIAL HOMES
  264 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City; Tels. 713-5231 to 35; 714-0867; 714-0868
  ST. PETER FUNERAL HOMES
  296 Quezon Ave., Quezon City; Tels. 372-5084; 410-9286/87
- **TAGUIG-PATEROS**
  FUNERARIA ANGEL QUIOGUE
  M. Almeda St., Pateros, Metro Manila; Tels. 642-3010; 633-3602
  GARDEN OF MEMORIES MEMORIAL PARK
  Calsadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila; Tels. 642-6181 to 82
  HERITAGE PARK
  Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
  Tels. (DL) 845-2341 to 42; (TL) 845-2334 to 38 loc. 110/112

PROVINCIAL

- **ALBAY**
  LIGÑON HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS, INC.
  Bugtong Road, Legaspi City; Tels. (052) 820-0188; 0917-2074152
- **BACOLOD**
  ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
  Ground Flr. Rolling Hills Chapel, 27th-Lacson St., Mandalagan, Bacolod City; Tel. 433-7132
- **BAGUIO**
  LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
  79 Naguillan Rd., Baguio City; Tel. (074) 443-3337; (074) 442-3117
- **BATAAN**
  SANTUARIO GARDEN & CHAPELS
  Talisay Road, Balanga City, Bataan; Tels. (047) 2370643 • 7911766
- **BULACAN**
  FUNERARIA TUASON
  Poblacion, San Miguel, Bulacan 3011; Tels. (044) 764-0281; 678-0266; (0917) 895-0603
- **CAVITE**
  FUNERARIA SAMSON
  145 Bayan Luma, Imus, Cavite; Tels. (046) 471-3375; 471-2675
  LA FUNERARIA SAPINOSO
  G. Tirona St., Imus, Cavite; Tels. (046) 471-3386; (046) 471-4417; (046) 571-1978
- **CEBU**
  COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
  Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City; Tels. 231-0721; 231-3192
  CEBU ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
  Cebu Branch: A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City, Cebu; Tels. 346-2543; 346-2601
- **DAVAO**
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  Camus Ext. cor. J. Abad Santos, Davao City; Tels. (082) 227-1201; 227-1258
- **ILOCOS**
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  SAN RAMON FUNERAL HOMES
  2020 Brgy. Dila, Sta. Rosa, Laguna
  Tels. (049) 837-5652; 531-4142; Fax (049) 531-4989
  ZUASOLA FUNERAL HOMES
  Brgy. Del Remedio, San Pablo City, Laguna
  Tels. (049) 562-1668; 800-2914
  Cel. No. (0917) 5016963
- **PAMPANGA**
  FUNERARIA PANGILINAN
  Santo Ent[illegible] co cor. P. Burgos St., Lourdes S[illegible], Angeles City
  Tels. (045) [illegible]88-2959 ; (045) 322-5247
- **RIZAL**
  OUR LADY OF PEACE MEMORIAL PARK CHAPEL & SERVICES, INC.
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  Tel. No. 697-0782; 697-0026; 650-7428;
  Fax : 697-2764
  F. SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
  Guitnang Bayan, San Mateo, Rizal; Tels. 649-5949, 942-4460
  HOLY GARDENS MEMORIAL PARK
  Third Level, Unishoppe Complex, Quezon Ave., Angono, Rizal
  Tels. 651-1711; 651-0737
  MARIAN MEMORIAL CHAPELS
  Marcos Hiway, Antipolo, Rizal; Tels. 645-1855,
- **ZAMBALES**
  DALLUAY MEMORIAL SERVICES
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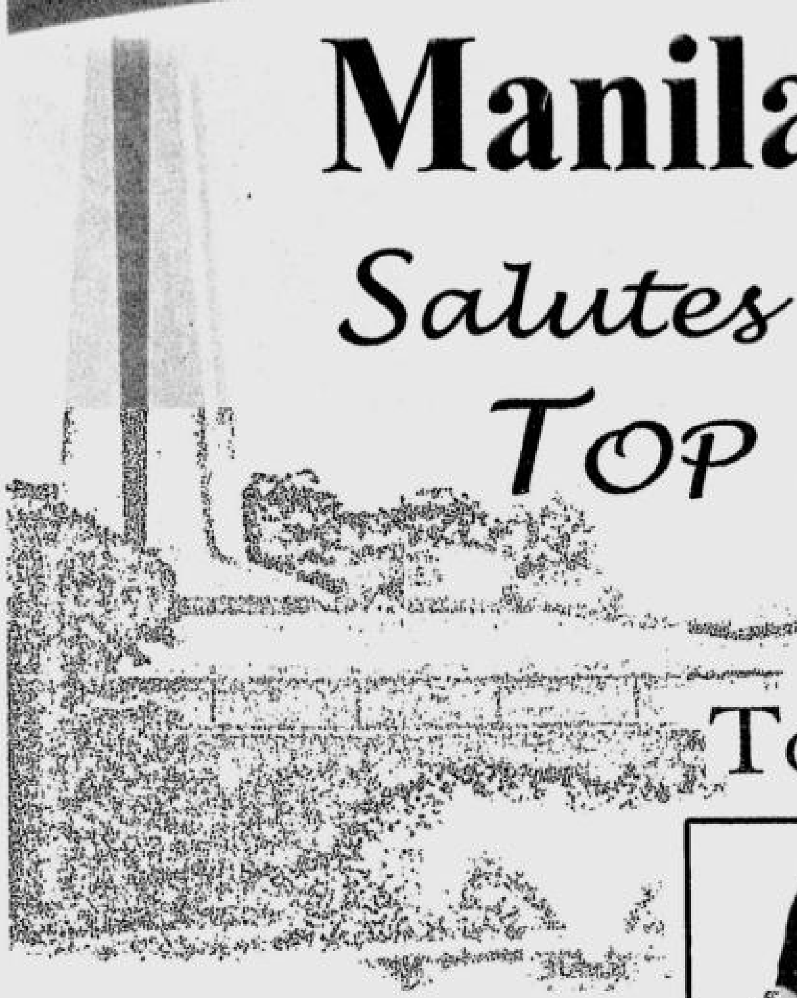
  Tels. (047) 222-3605; (047) 611-1086; (047) 222-4512; (047) 224-2014
  OLONGAPO MEMORIAL PARK
  Del Rosario St., Tabacuhan, Sta. Rita, Olongapo;
  Tel. No. (047) 223-1692

Manila Memorial Park

Salutes its... Top Sales Achievers of 2004



Top Agency Managers

GREGORIO P. ALCANTARA, Jr.

ISABELITA C. PINEDA

LILY T. CUEVAS

A.ORDOÑEZ / A.TAYSON

PURISIMA Z. MACABEO

CARMEN C. LEYSON

PRISCILLA V. BARRIGA

CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD'S MESSAGE

My heartfelt congratulations to the Top Sales Achievers of Manila Memorial Park for Calendar Year 2004!

Once again you have proven that despite the challenging business climate, success may still be achieved with passion and perseverance.
For the last 41 years, you have made the Company proud, and I am confident that we will maintain our position in the years to come.

Congratulations to all of you, and more power!

HELEN Y. DEE
Chairperson of the Board

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all and congratulations to the winners of our 2004 sales contest.

As has been shown by our commendable sales figures year in and year out, our company has been blessed with sales people who not only excel in promoting our goods and services but, more important, have shown great resiliency and perseverance in achieving our mutual goals.

Again, congratulations. With your help we look forward to calendar year 2005 as another banner year for Manila Memorial Park!

L. Siguion Reyna
President

EVP - COO's MESSAGE

It is with great pride that I greet the top sales associates of Manila Memorial Park.

For forty one years now, our sales people have shown that a great idea is nothing if it is not promoted just as well.

Their remarkable selling skills, coupled with first-class products and services, have been our formula for success. I salute their determination, loyalty to the Company and their outstanding overall achievement in sales!

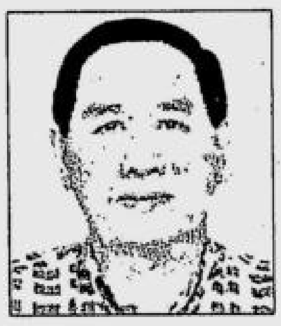
Congratulations to all of you, and more power this Calendar Year 2005!

ENRIQUE B. LAGDAMEO
Chief Operating Officer

Top District Unit Managers

Mary D. Abad
Alcantara Agency

Rosella O. Alcantara
Alcantara Agency



Godofredo P. Pineda
Pineda Agency

Tung Hong Chan
Cuevas Agency

Top Unit Managers

Danilo M. Reyes
Alcantara Agency

Mary D. Abad
Alcantara Agency

Melissa M. Yaneza
Alcantara Agency

Rosella O. Alcantara
Alcantara Agency

Gisbert C. Pineda
Pineda Agency

Florinda B. Ignacio
Alcantara Agency

El Vincent Macabeo
Macabeo Agency

Modesta Beltran
Alcantara Agency

Ma. Lovina Sangalang
Alcantara Agency

Ma. Isabel Socorro Barriga
Barriga Agency

Ma. Teresa C. Lirio
Alcantara Agency

Zenaida G. Gutierrez
Alcantara Agency

MANILA MEMORIAL PARK
LUZON • VISAYAS • MINDANAO
SUCAT • HOLY CROSS • DASMARIÑAS • BULACAN • CEBU • DAVAO

Top Producers

Mercedes Mijares
R.Alcantara Unit
Alcantara Ageny

Gisbert Pineda
Pineda Unit
Pineda Agency

Analyn Reyes
Sangalang Unit
Alcantara Agency

Melissa Yaneza
Yaneza Unit
Alcantara Agency

Marylu P. Yu
Yu Unit
Cuevas Agency

Edwin Macabeo
Macabeo Unit
Macabeo Agency

Modesta Beltran
Beltran Unit
Alcantara Agency

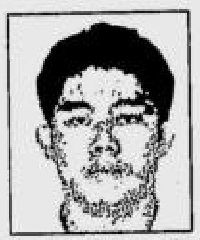
Vivien S. Panopio
Panopio Unit
Panopio Agency

Minda Presbitero
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Polly M. Walde
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Alicia S. Sy
Villanueva Unit
Ordoñez/Tayson Agency

Zhi Qian Zhuang
Zhuang Unit
Cuevas Agency


Bernard F. Aguirre
Aguirre Unit
Pineda Agency

Jean L. Molina
Lirio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Andrew Tiu
Tiu Unit
Cuevas Agency

Danilo Rodriguez
Rodriguez Unit
Mayuga/Rodriguez Agency

Maribel Masalta
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Ramil Ordoñez
Ordoñez Unit
Ordoñez/Tayson Agency

Lucia T. Co
Santos Unit
Leyson Agency

Julie G. Reyes
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Epitanio Romero III
N. Remoto Unit
Cuevas Agency

Manuel A. Ching
Yaneza Unit
Alcantara Agency

Mary D. Abad
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Lourdes G. Royo
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Florinda Ignacio
Ignacio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Rachel Ann Barriga
M. Barriga Unit
Barriga Agency

Evelyn Dizon
C. Mercado Unit
Alcantara Agency

Luis Canaria
Ignacio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Myrna Mendoza
A. Mendoza Unit
Pineda Agency

1.8M and UP Producers

Mercedes Mijares
R.Alcantara Unit
Alcantara Agency

Gisbert Pineda
Pineda Unit
Pineda Agency

Analyn Reyes
Sangalang Unit
Alcantara Agency

Melissa Yaneza
Yaneza Unit
Alcantara Agency

Marylu P. Yu
Yu Unit
Cuevas Agency

Edwin Macabeo
Macabeo Unit
Macabeo Agency

Modesta Beltran
Beltran Unit
Alcantara Agency

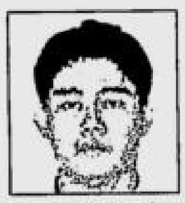
Vivien S. Panopio
Panopio Unit
Panopio Agency

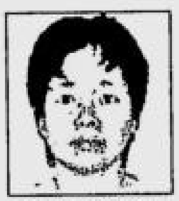
Minda Presbitero
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Polly M. Walde
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Alicia S. Sy
Villanueva Unit
Ordoñez/Tayson Agency

Zhi Qian Zhuang
Zhuang Unit
Cuevas Agency


Bernard F. Aguirre
Aguirre Unit
Pineda Agency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Alcantara Agency

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Tiu Unit
Cuevas Agency

Danilo Rodriguez
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Alcantara Agency

Ramil Ordoñez
Ordoñez Unit
Ordoñez/Tayson Agency

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Santos Unit
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Rachel Ann Barriga
M. Barriga Unit
Barriga Agency

Evelyn Dizon
C. Mercado Unit
Alcantara Agency

Luis Canaria
Ignacio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Myrna Mendoza
A. Mendoza Unit
Pineda Agency

Rosa Manalang
Lirio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Annabelle Robles
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Rachel Brenda Torres
Torres Unit
Alcantara Agency

Amalia B. Leaño
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Justina Cajiles
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Narciso Dumalagan
Dumalagan Unit
Alcantara Agency

Nancy Monis
Gutierrez Unit
Alcantara Agency

Teresita Dantes
Ignacio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Maximina Dumalagan
Dumalagan Unit
Alcantara Agency

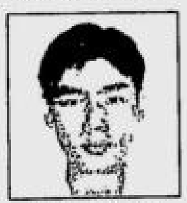
Wilson Litam
Litam Unit
Ordoñez/Tayson Agency

Margarita Gopela
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Romanita Brequillo
Yaneza Unit
Alcantara Agency

Glenda M. Liwanag
M. Barriga Unit
Barriga Agency

Luzviminda Gabales
Mangapit Unit
Alcantara Agency


Kenney Tung
Tung Unit
Cuevas Agency

Jerry Abarquez
Gutierrez Unit
Alcantara Agency

Ma. Paz R. Pineda
Santos Unit
Leyson Agency

Mary Soriano
Santiago Unit
Ordoñez/Tayson Agency

Marissa M. Paguia
Yaneza Unit
Alcantara Agency

Elizabeth Ng
Pineda Unit
Pineda Agency

Isabel P. Orfiano
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Jue Zi Cai
Zhuang Unit
Cuevas Agency

Evelyn Melanie Sangria
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Areli A. Ancheta
Ancheta Unit
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Senen Saniano
Abad Unit
Alcantara Agency

Zenaida Gutierrez
Gutierrez Unit
Alcantara Agency

Felicisima Solutan
Ignacio Unit
Alcantara Agency

Imelda Escatron
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Bethsaida Mandia
Yaneza Unit
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Daisy Macarandang
Yaneza Unit
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Beth M. Papas
Papas Unit
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Elsie E. Jimenez
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Adoracion Merhan
Merhan Unit
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Petra C. Reyes
Litam Unit
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Adoracion Castro
Papas Unit
Alcantara Agency

Purificacion Inhaynes
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Cristina G. Reyes
Yaneza Unit
Alcantara Agency

Benajamin Dizon
Dizon Unit
Cuevas Agency

Bertram Magbanua
Rodriguez Unit
Mayuga/Rodriguez Agency

Maria Ana De·Leon
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Elsie Matavia
R. Alcantara Unit
Alcantara Agency

Nedy Ravanilla
Reyes Unit
Alcantara Agency

Rose V. Go
Tejada Unit
Leyson Agency

Norma A. Uy
Uy Unit
Cuevas Agency

Sally S. Galarido
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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Mind your child's brain health

PROPER nutrition, the right combination of play and rest, and good hygiene habits make up every parent's winning formula for ensuring their child's health and wellbeing. Parents take extra care and conscientiously monitor the progress of their child's physical development, from tottering tots to school-ready youngsters.

As they become of school age, children are faced with new tasks and challenges that require not just physical but mental abilities. It is at this time that parents need to be more mindful of their child's brain health.

Your child's brain is made up of a complex network of billions of nerve cells or neurons, which develop during the fetal development stage. Once they're born, their brain stops developing these neurons and from then on, they live with what they have and less everyday as brain cells die at a regular rate. That is why, your child's brain health deserves the same importance that you give to his body.

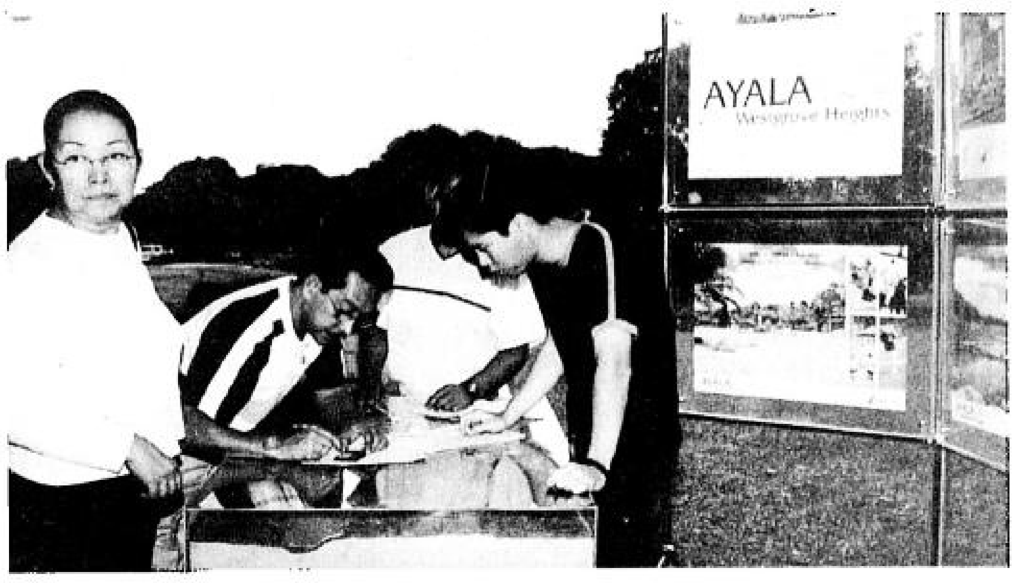
Diminished mental performance and memory loss can result when the brain does not receive a constant supply of oxygen and a steady stream of brain nutrients. This early, children can experience 'recall deficiency' as they are constantly exposed to stress in school from exams and pressure to compete and cope, as well as toxic fumes and infections. Their ability to absorb and recall new information depends on how healthy their brain cells are.

A well-balanced and complete diet aids very well in your child's mental growth. But brain nutrients are found not just in the foods we eat, but also in many plants that we do not eat such as the Centella asiatica (gotu kola) and Bacopa monniera (brahmi). Scientific studies have proven that these herbs help maintain or even improve cognitive functions, including the ability to learn, remember and process information. Centella asiatica and bacopa monniera have been valued as 'brain foods' for over 3,000 years by eastern cultures and recent studies have substantiated the memory-enhancing support that these plants provide.

These two brain tonics can be found in Memory Plus Syrup, a specially-formulated brain health supplement for children with a unique blend of botanicals and nutrients to nourish and protect your child's brain cells while enhancing memory. Its active ingredients are standardized extracts of Centella asiatica, and Bacopa monniera, found to help improve concentration, and improve mental capacity. It also contains Lecithin from soybean which contains phospholipids that are crucial for proper brain structure and function.

Together with a healthy diet, a regular dose of Memory Plus Syrup can help revitalize your child's intellectual abilities, improve his retention of information and aid in learning and memory. Memory Plus Syrup provides a healthy, safe and natural way to boost your child's performance in school despite the constant stress of examinations, homework and recitations.

Available at Mercury Drug, Watson's and GNC outlets nationwide. For more information call 413-5252 or 413-1933



AYALA WESTGROVE HEIGHTS CELEBRATES CREATIVITY

Ayala Westgrove Heights started the year with an activity that is close to every homeowner's heart—interior decoration. Designing one's humble sanctuary was the order of the day during an open house that featured a special furniture exhibit and a workshop for residents and visitors alike. Held at the subdivision's cool, breezy Central Park Pavilion, the small exhibit by furniture shop Indigo showcased attractively functional showroom pieces such as a living room set, a dining tableau, and a chair and side table tandem. Representatives of Indigo also conducted a workshop where they imparted practical advice and creative tips for homeowners. Topics included handy tips on buying furniture, preserving furniture from stains, and choosing interior color schemes for different seasons. The event also allowed guests to view the residential development, reputed to be a peaceful and secure abode amid the hills and groves. Ayala Westgrove Heights wondrously merges a beautiful, nature-rich setting with attractive, modern facilities that cater to every resident's daily living needs. For more information about the growing community, call 848-5000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph, or e-mail ayala-sales@ayalaland.com.ph. Shown are guests of Ayala Westgrove Heights' open house event registering and checking out the development's scale model.

Product FILES

For feet as light as air

FOR FEET as light as air, use Titania before taking flight. The Titania Vital Foot Spa relieves the aches and pains of tired and weary feet, making feet light and all set to fly. The Deodorant Foot Soap rids the feet of fungus-causing germs and gives feet that fresh feeling. The softening lotion gives feet that creamy skin coating for frictionless gliding in the air. And to prevent ill-smelling exhaust fumes, mist your feet with Titania Footspray. All these preparations make for a smooth flight with Titania Foot Care Products. Titania is exclusively distributed by Filstar Distributors Corp, 2/F Reliance Center Building, E. Rodriguez Jr.Ave., Ugong, Pasig City with tel. nos. 671-0555 and 671-3171.

WELLCOM, SAMSUNG SIGN MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Wellcom, one of the biggest retailers of Samsung Mobile recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Samsung. The agreement further strengthens the relationship between both parties assuring a stronger presence in the retail phone market for 2005. Hyuck Jae shim incoming president and CEO of Samsung Philippines shook the hand of Philip Lim director for marketing and operations of Wellcom to seal the agreement. Witnessing the event were: (back) Henry Arellano, PNU department supervisor of Wellcom; Mark Dewey Sergio, product manager, Samsung Mobile; Jerry Su, technical director, Wellcom; Paul Santos, senior sales and marketing manager First Asia Mobile Inc; (front) Kenny Khoo, president, First Asia Mobile Inc; Bono Lin, vice president, Wellcome; Maeng Dal Bae, vice president, Samsung and Annaise Fragante, head of Samsung Mobile.

A jolly surprise at Jollibee's Drive-thru

JOLLIBEE'S drive-thru service provides the same appetizing menu without having to get down your car. Enjoy the new Fish Fillet Supreme sandwich as you cruise down the expressway and chase away the summer breeze with a Choco Sundae. And don't forget to reward the designated driver with a delicious Yumburger paired with Jolly Crispy Fries. With Jollibee's exciting line-up of food choices, your road trip will never be a bore. Plus, with the growing number of 24-hour Jollibee stores, you can drop by a Jollibee drive-thru any time of the day. And as a special treat for loyal patrons like you, Jollibee is giving away a document holder for every P250 purchase. Keep your travel documents organized with this nifty bag that's available in three exciting colors. This summer, fuel up for the long ride with Jollibee.

ITALIAN EMBARKS ON MISSION OF MERCY

With little fanfare, an Italian national, who has made the Philippines his home for the last 30 years, has been embarking on several civic projects all over the country, including the staging of Little League baseball for the children of rebels and civilians, both Muslim and Christian in war-torn Mindanao. Together with his well-meaning Filipino and American friends, Sultan Andy de Rossi, who has was conferred the title of nobility in 2002 by the Royal Houses of the Sultanate of Lanao, spearheaded recently - through his 3P Foundation (Peace and Prosperity for the Philippines Foundation) - the 'Mercy Flyout Mission' for the typhoon victims of Infanta and Real in Quezon province. Held in cooperation with the US Embassy, headed by Amb. Francis Ricciardone; Knightsbridge Int'l, led by Sir Edward Artis and the Philippine Coast Goard 101st Auxiliary Squadron through Commodore Romeo Herman, the 10-day mercy mission provided medical and relief assistance to the residents of the devastated region. Photo shows Sultan de Rossi (2nd from right) with members of the 3P Foundation medical and relief team at the 'Mercy Flyout Mission' site. Also in photo are (from left): Randy Manaloto of CMC Asia, Major Fred Sanchez, Special Forces Exec-O, and Lt. Col. Jun Parlade, 1st Special Forces battalion commander.

Interbev ties up with Virgin

WHAT happens when two of the world's most daring companies get together? Softdrink-guzzling Filipinos get a better and sweeter deal.

For those who have not heard about the latest industry news, business tycoon Lucio Tan, through his soft drinks company Interbev, just inked a franchise partnership with Richard Branson, head honcho of the Virgin Group of Companies, to launch Virgin Colours softdrinks in the Philippines. The licensed Virgin variants that will be launched initially are Red (cola flavor), Orange (orange flavor), and Blue (lemon lime) in returnable glass bottles (RGB), plastic bottles and cans. With the tie-up, Filipino consumers can now expect a more affordable alternative that, according to blind taste tests, "tastes better than their current softdrink brands."

Industry analysts say that this is the most promising partnership in the non-alcoholic drinks category in recent history and one that competition will definitely be watching closely.

"This is not just a partnership between our companies," Hubert Tan, VP of Interbev, discloses. "The two chairs have always been passionate about introducing exceptional quality products at a price anyone can afford."

In his interviews, Richard Branson constantly repeats this philosophy: "If you genuinely offer the consumer more, with better quality at competitive prices and you keep on innovating, then you can't go wrong!"

Interbev officials also revealed that the softdrinks market has been growing at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6 percent for the past 10 years and the low priced segment is growing at an even faster rate. "Because of the current economic situation, consumers are now demanding better value for their products. We believe our product, which contains specially formulated concentrate from Europe, has unique packaging and is priced competitively, offers compelling value to the consumer," Tan states.

With the new franchise partnership, Tan said that thousands of jobs shall likewise be generated. "In addition, it will provide additional income to distributors and store owners who sell our products because our margins are highly competitive. All these will ultimately benefit not only the consumers but the business community as well."

PDI PHOTO/BETOY JOHNSON

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CULINARY GRAND FRIX 2005

The Culinary Grand Frix 2005 was recently held at the Philippine Trade and Training Center. Shown are the 1st prize winners - Dream Team Challenge.

'Let's Talk Girl' hits Bacolod

PH CARE hits Bacolod with its free symposium on proper feminine care dubbed as 'Let's Talk Girl'. More than 5,000 female attendees from 6 different venues covering The University of St. La Salle, La Consolacion College, Domingo Lacson High School, Luisa Medel National High School, Fortune Town and lastly Victoria's Milling Corp.

'Let's Talk Girl' is one of pH Care's current activities that will run for the entire year visiting major key cities of the country. The objective is to educate and empower women through good health and proper feminine care. Dr. Catherine Jison, OB Gyne, member of Philippine Obstetrics and Gynecologist Society - Negros Occidental Chapter, shared her time and expertise for the symposiums and even conducted one-on-one free consultations.

Watch out for 'Let's Talk Girl' as it continues to educate and empower more and more women through its nationwide tour. To know more about the activity call Ad Staunch Communication Network at (02)550-1732.

RCBC goes live with SunGard's TAPS

SUNGARD Asia Pacific, an operating unit of SunGard (NYSE:SDS), announced recently that the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC), the Philippines' fifth largest private domestic commercial bank, has gone live with SunGard's Total Accounting and Portfolio Management Solution (TAPS) for the management of its trust banking operations. RCBC is using TAPS for administration of its segregated trust accounts, common trust funds, savings plans and provident funds, lending, custody and reporting.

TAPS will help RCBC improve operating efficiencies by providing a single integrated multi-currency system that offers automation and straight-through processing capabilities.

SunGard worked closely with RCBC and its trust team to customize TAPS to meet the specific requirements of the Philippines. A dedicated team of SunGard professionals has now been established in the Philippines and will continue to work with RCBC and other SunGard customers.

John Wilson, president, SunGard Asia Pacific, said "The implementation of TAPS at RCBC, a leading bank with a comprehensive trust operation, has been a significant project for SunGard Asia Pacific. The project involved customizing TAPS to meet the specific requirements of the Philippines. SunGard now has a single integrated system that provides a comprehensive solution to trust banking. We have built our team in the Philippines and opened an office in Manila that is home to an expanding group of trust experts. We are very committed to the Philippines and I look forward to our continued expansion."

PWU 85TH YEAR

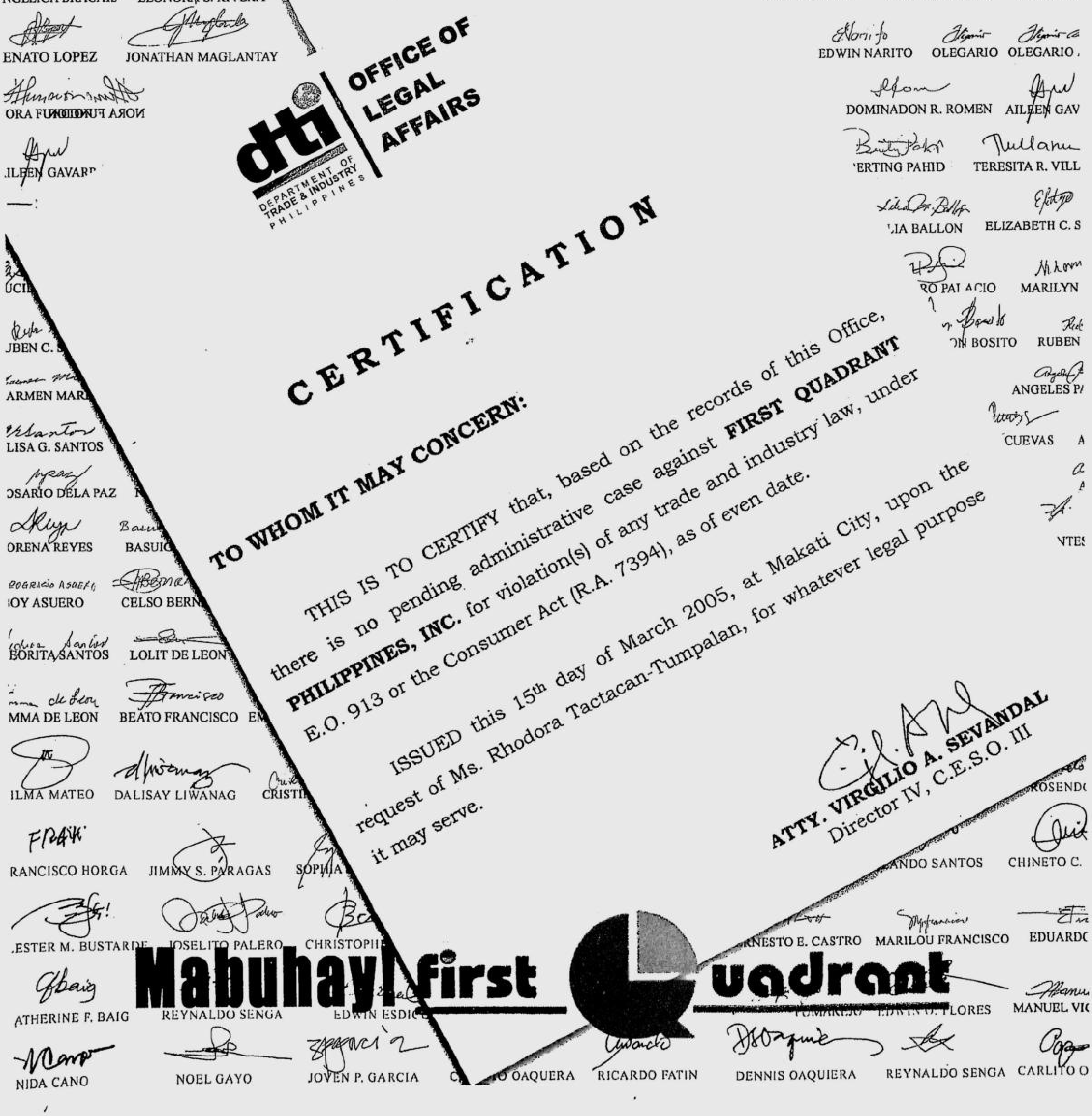
Silver jubilarians High School Batch of 1980 celebrated at the recent Grand Reunion of the Philippine Women's University's 85th year held at the Manila Hotel. Batch 80 is putting together a photo album in CD form and soliciting past and present photos from batchmates. Members of PWU high school batch 80 are requested to email JMD-Batch80@yahoogroups.com or contact Estee Claudio at 848-1474. Shown are (standing from left): Luz Fajardo (present high school principal), Mimi David, Arlene Torres Guariño, Melanie Riego Manaros, Bing Henson, Kit Isorena Chiluco, Bullie Magsakay de Pala, Gula Nakpil de Castro, Mona Manalo, Valerie Valdez Bernardino; (seated from left): Miren Nuyda Guerrero, Estee Claudio, Miriam Casuayan Solitario, Purificacion Torres (former high school principal), Joyce delos Santos Pineda, Hannah Sagull, Yoyo Costiniano Bernardo, Pam Bordey Llige.

Isang bukas na liham mula sa mga magsasapatos ng Marikina para sa Department of Trade and Industry:

Kami po ay taos-pusong nagpapasalamat sa pamunuan ng Department of Trade and Industry sa inyong pagkilala sa First Quadrant Philippines, Inc. (FQPI) bilang isang multi-level marketing company sa ating bansa.

Wala pong pagsidlan ang aming kaligayahan sa inyong naging pagkakasunduan at umasa po kami na sa tulong ng Department of Trade and Industry, higit pang uunlad ang First Quadrant bilang isa sa mga haligi sa industriya ng sapatos.

Mabuhay po kayo!



OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

dti
DEPARTMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY
PHILIPPINES

CERTIFICATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that, based on the records of this Office, there is no pending administrative case against **FIRST QUADRANT PHILIPPINES, INC.** for violation(s) of any trade and industry law, under E.O. 913 or the Consumer Act (R.A. 7394), as of even date.

ISSUED this 15th day of March 2005, at Makati City, upon the request of Ms. Rhodora Tactacan-Tumpalan, for whatever legal purpose it may serve.

ATTY. VIRGILIO A. SEVANDAL
Director IV, C.E.S.O. III

Mabuhay! First Quadrant

NTONIO BONIFACIO
JUDITH DE LEON
CARMELITA DELA CRUZ
EDGAR B. ADANO
ANITA RESNGIT
FE D. BERNARDINO
GINA CASTAÑEDA
DULSE
LNA D. MARAFINA
ROBERTO S. GIL
JENNE
VANESSA C. ELISEO
ANICIA DEL ROSARIO
TERESITA R. VILLANUEVA
PURITA OBOSA
ROMME
MILYN B. MOJICA
JACQUELINE RULL
ODESSA Z. ESPINOSA
ELENITA R. GALANG
ROD POMAREJO
FLORESTO VILLON
SYLVIA GARNACE
NIÑA
ROMEO MOLIN
RENATO DE
GUEDO BAYSIC
OLEGARIO ARNOCO
JONATHAN MAGLA
RENATO LOPEZ
MARLON ARNOCO
JOEL
RISTINA R. ASPARO
GIL C
OLFO DE GUZMAN
ARNEL GAVIOLA
RONIE S.
IANUEL U. DIONISIO
EFRE
ZA M. PARAGAS
BENITO U. DIONISIO
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ICARDO C. SUMAMPONG
JOSE
N. NARITO
MERLITA M. ONTE
NUMERIANO
ANY BOY ANDAPIC
ELMA PATIN
ARNOCO
LUCY GLORIA
ROSALIA
YRNA AUSTRIA
NOLAN PANGILIN
ROWENA MANUZON
VILMA
DANNA SAYAS
ROSEMARIE MIRAFLOR
EL BUENAVENTURA
CAPRIANO J.
IERCY CALANZA
GEMMA JULIANO
ENAIDA BALUYOT
PURITA OBOSA
CARMELITA M.
NGELICA BRAGAIS
LEONORA S. RIVERA
MAY SANTIAGO
RENATO LOPEZ
MARLON
ENATO LOPEZ
JONATHAN MAGLANTAY
EDWIN NARITO
OLEGARIO
OLEGARIO
NORA FU
DOMINADON R. ROMEN
AILEEN GAV
ILEEN GAVARR
ERTING PAHID
TERESITA R. VILL
IA BALLON
ELIZABETH C. S
RO PALACIO
MARILYN
JBEN C. S
ON BOSITO
RUBEN
ARMEN MAR
ANGELES P
LISA G. SANTOS
CUEVAS
OSARIO DELA PAZ
ORENA REYES
BASUIO
OY ASUERO
CELSO BERN
BORITA SANTOS
LOLIT DE LEON
MMA DE LEON
BEATO FRANCISCO
ILMA MATEO
DALISAY LIWANAG
CRISTI
ROSENDO
RANCISCO HORGA
JIMMY S. PARAGAS
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ANDO SANTOS
CHINETO C.
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NESTO E. CASTRO
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ATHERINE F. BAIG
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EDWIN ESDIC
EDWIN O. FLORES
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NIDA CANO
NOEL GAYO
JOVEN P. GARCIA
OAQUERA
RICARDO FATIN
DENNIS OAQUIERA
REYNALDO SENGA
CARLITO O

sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart)
or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

STYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MO U • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

LENTEN Baked Crab

Easy-does-it Lenten treat

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

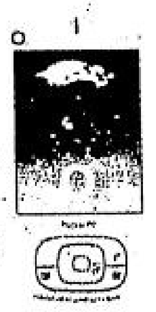
IT'S THE season of Lent and, once again, we temporarily stay away from pork, beef and fowl dishes and savor the goodness and splendor of seafood and vegetables.

STEP BY STEP

Fortunately, there are so many ways to cook seafood that eating it in the next few days and even after the Lenten season is not really much of a hardship. We can bake, steam, broil, fry or grill; serve it plain or coated in batter, with or without shells.

Seafood is just so flexible that you can always come up with

EASY-DOES-IT/ C4



The O2 Xda II mini: Big Things Come In Small Packages

Gone are the days when PDAs were made big and chunky to fit all those functions that would meet your needs. The O2 Xda II mini breaks that tradition and comes up with a small and sleek PDA phone that's truly – and wonderfully – a whole lot more.

During the successful launch of the Xda II mini at the Mandarin Oriental poolside last March 14 hosted by Paolo Bediones, spectators were given a first-hand treat on what this baby has to offer. For one, its amazingly small size at 58 x 108 x 18.1mm fits comfortably in your palm and in your pocket. Its sleek silver finish creates an image of style and class that's above the rest, and its 2.8" 65K-colour TFT-LCD gives excellent viewing pleasure. Interesting to note is the 5-way navigation pad that adds to its sophistication, unlike other PDAs.

But the Xda II mini is not just about looks. The combination of PDA functions and mobile phone capabilities makes it the perfect companion for business or pleasure. It readily has a full suite of Microsoft® applications, including the Pocket Office applications that's very helpful for the mobile yuppie. And why bring a separate cellular phone with you when the Xda II mini functions as a mobile phone at the same time? With the Xda II mini, you don't have to fumble in your pockets to make a call – because it's all there in that one cool gadget.

Access to emails and the Internet is no problem, too. With its Wireless Modem, Bluetooth and infrared, you are always connected to your desktop computer and to others.

Of course, the Xda II mini also has a fun side to it. For the shutterbug in you, here's great news: the Xda II mini has a 1.3 mega pixel camera that's great for photo and video capture. That's better quality than those taken using other VGA camera-phones. Plus its audio and video player functions makes the Xda II mini a great buddy during those times when you need to liven up those boring days.

The Xda II mini is simply an outstanding PDA phone that gives you that seemingly one-two punch that you don't usually get from other bigger PDA phones. A combination of function and style, it bears truth to the saying, "size doesn't matter." Because you'll know with just one look, this little David is a great gadget to have.

Xda II mini
O2
See things differently.
Designed for Windows Mobile
The Xda II mini is small in size, but big on features. It has a vibrant 2.8" 65K-colour TFT-LCD screen. Contained within compact dimensions is a full-featured office suite for all your business needs.
There is also an Internet browser, MSN® Messenger and Windows Media® Player, so you can surf, chat with friends, or download and enjoy the latest games and MP3 tunes anytime you want.
Create your own fun with the 1.3 mega pixel camera for high-resolution pictures and video you can share via MMS, email, Bluetooth™ or Infrared. Or store them on your complimentary 256MB SD memory card. Try it out today. You'll see it's like no other.

SeeO2.com

• Microsoft® Windows Mobile™ 2003 PocketPC Phone Edition 2nd Edition • Intel® PXA 272 Bulverde CPU • 64MB SDRAM, 64MB ROM • Pocket Outlook®, ClearVue™ PDF & PPT, Pocket Internet Explorer, MSN® Messenger, Active Sync® • Bluetooth® • Infrared • Tri-band GPRS • MMS, SMS • Java™ • MMC/SDIO card slot • Microphone & loudspeaker • Supports MIDI, WAV, WMA & MP3 formats

Delifrance.

THE NEW branches will offer the things Delifrance is famous for like its clubhouse sandwich, pastas, and pastries.

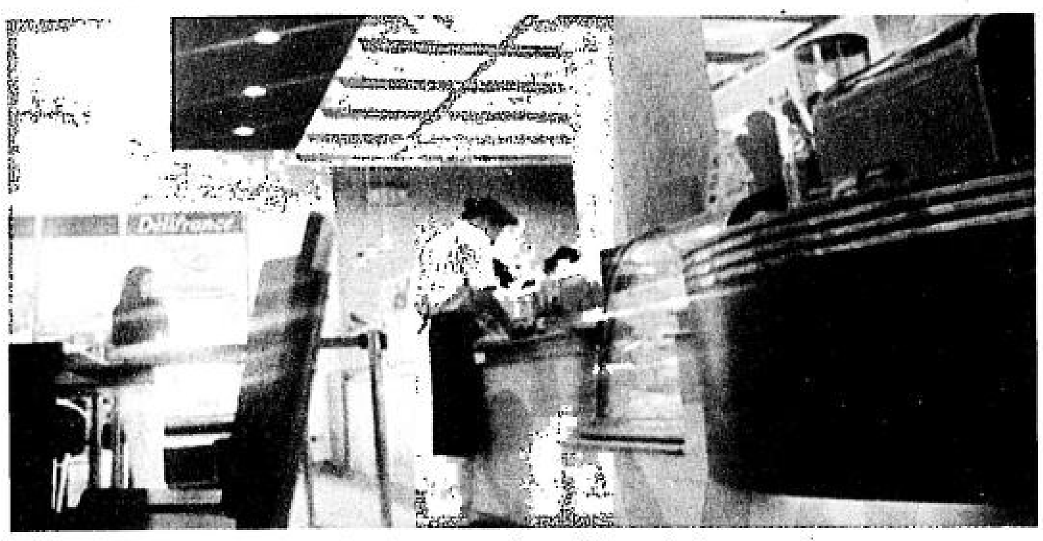
Café chain opens new branches

DELIFRANCE has opened five new branches in Metro Manila.

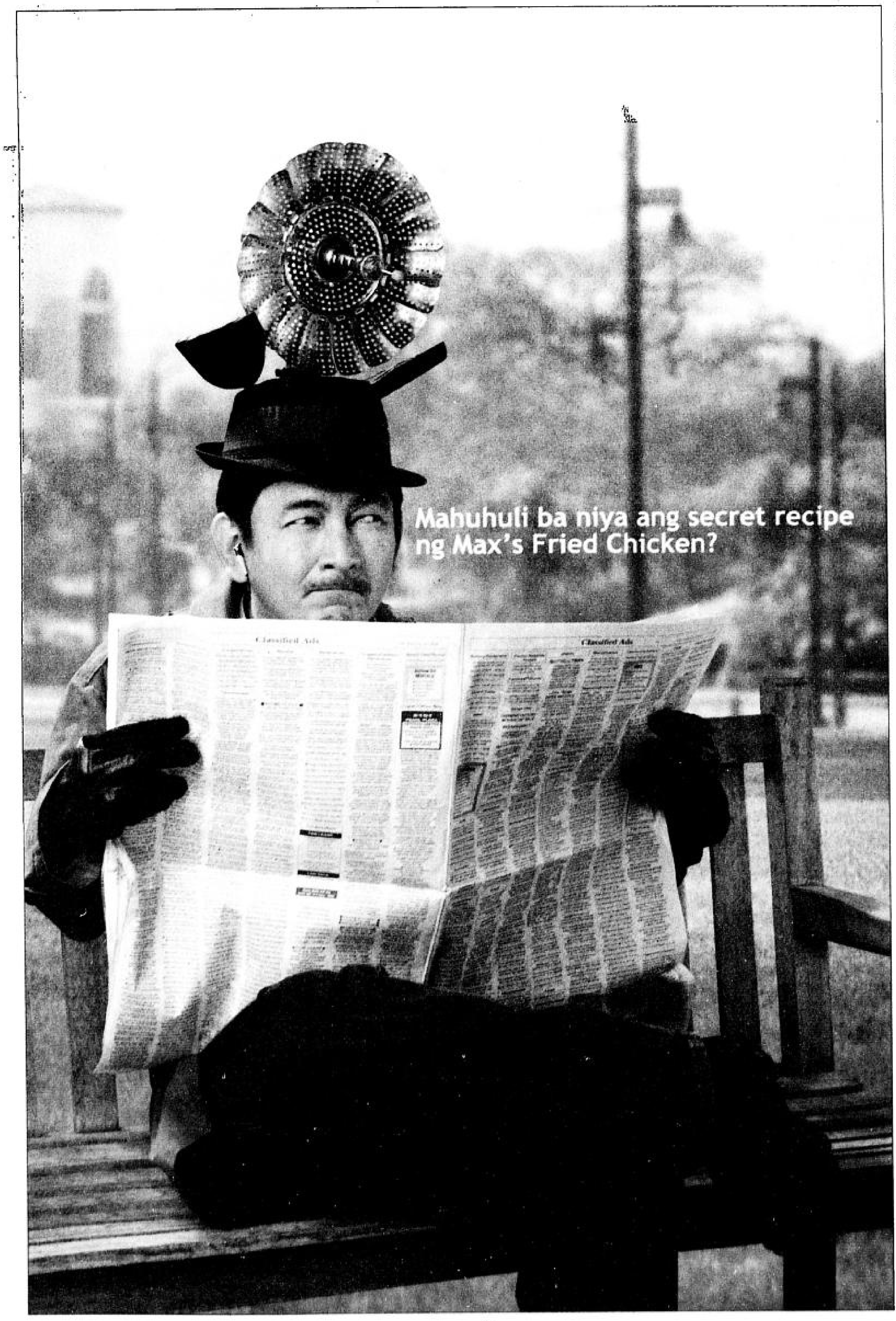
The new outlets have a new look. Soft, monochromatic colors have been used for the interiors.

Delifrance is known for its clubhouse sandwich, salads, pastas, sandwiches and pastries. It is found in 50 countries in five continents.

In the Philippines, there are now a total of 29 Delifrance branches. Three of the new outlets are in Makati: on Valero Street, Salcedo Village, right beside Citibank; in the Asian Institute of Management Conference Center, and Shoemart Makati Bridgeway. The other two branches are in Shell South Luzon Expressway (north bound) and St. Luke's Hospital Compound in Quezon City.



SOFT, monochromatic colors give the new outlets a different look.


Mahuhuli ba niya ang secret recipe ng Max's Fried Chicken?

Designer almost ruins wedding

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

CLAIRE de Lune (not her real name) sent her story to warn brides-to-be about unprofessional wedding gown designers.

She recalled in detail how she almost turned into a nervous wreck waiting for unfinished gowns—hers and those of the entourage.

The designer she contracted, and paid well in advance, couldn't meet the deadline because she had accepted too many job orders—more than she could handle.

Claire recalled that, at one point, she was so stressed that she cried in the middle of Glorietta because the designer had canceled, for the nth time, a fitting session with members of the entourage.

"I called my mom, my soon-to-be mother-in-law and my aunts and, in between sobs, told them… we needed a back-up plan just in case the designer didn't deliver. I wasn't sure if any dressmaker (at that time) was going to accept (the job). It was the Christmas season and people would be closing shop for the holidays," Claire wrote. To end her weeks of nightmare and uncertainty, she hired three other dressmakers to make the gowns.

She concluded her story, "The wedding pushed through and everyone had beautiful dresses. But I still thought it was unfair of (the designer) to let me go through this. She took my money and left me hanging.

"I write this piece to warn future brides, wedding coordinators and bridal resources who may be considering the services of (this woman)."

New place for bookworms

Four journalists and a friend opened recently a special bookstore called BOOKshop, which the optimistic owners described as a "cultural/intellectual melting pot without pretensions."

Aside from trading new and used books, it will also be a venue for painting and photographic exhibits, as well as for poetry and short story readings.

Titles available at the shop range from the classics to erotica, war and sexuality, history, biographies, anthologies, environment, religious, and children's books.

"We're all book lovers… also bargain hunters so many of the books (since we've read them) are really cheap—cheaper than in bargain bins! And you need not wade through trash to find the gems because we've already done that for you," says spokesperson Inday Espina-Varona (incidentally, she's chair of the National Union of Journalists or NUJP, and editor in chief of Philippine Graphic magazine).

By the way, NUJP is appealing for book donations to support its three projects: to add to the collection of the library for journalists, raise funds for NUJP's defense fund for journalists (cover legal fees, especially of victims of violence), and nationwide training seminars on safety and ethics.

The organization is also coming up with a News Sources Directory and is inviting non-government organizations to send the name of their organization, field of expertise, officers and contact numbers.

The bookstore is located at the ground floor of the office of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, 105 Sct. Castor, off Morato Avenue in Quezon City.

On blinkers

D. Coronel wrote: "Is it legal for civilian cars to go around with police emergency blinkers? I saw recently a white Ford car (plate number withheld) along Wilson Street that had this blinker. I have also noticed many civilian cars using a police siren, as well as private motorcycles with horns and blinkers (like those of) a cop's. They also act like warlords on the road.

"This (practice) poses a danger to us, innocent civilians, because we can no longer distinguish between real or fake police."

(The e-mail sender forwarded to us two photos of the white Ford with the police emergency blinker on the roof.)

Send consumer complaints and comments to giron@mailstation.net

Smart way to taste the good life

DINERS have a chance to win dinners for two or party packages for 50 at Italianni's, Outback and T.G.I. Friday's during the restaurants' "A Taste of the Gold Life" promo in cooperation with Smart.

Until May 5, Smart subscribers receive one electronic raffle coupon every time they dine at any of the three Bistro restaurants. Every purchase of food and drinks worth P250 or less gets one electronic raffle entry and every additional P250 to the bill gets one entry.

New Smart Gold patrons get one raffle entry upon activation of their account, plus one additional entrée with any entrée purchased. They just have to present proof of activation.

Thirty "Dinner for Two" certificates will be given away every week for 12 months. Two party packages for 50 persons each from T.G.I.Friday's, Outback and Italianni's will be awarded in the grand draw. Restaurant receipts will have to be presented to claim the prizes.

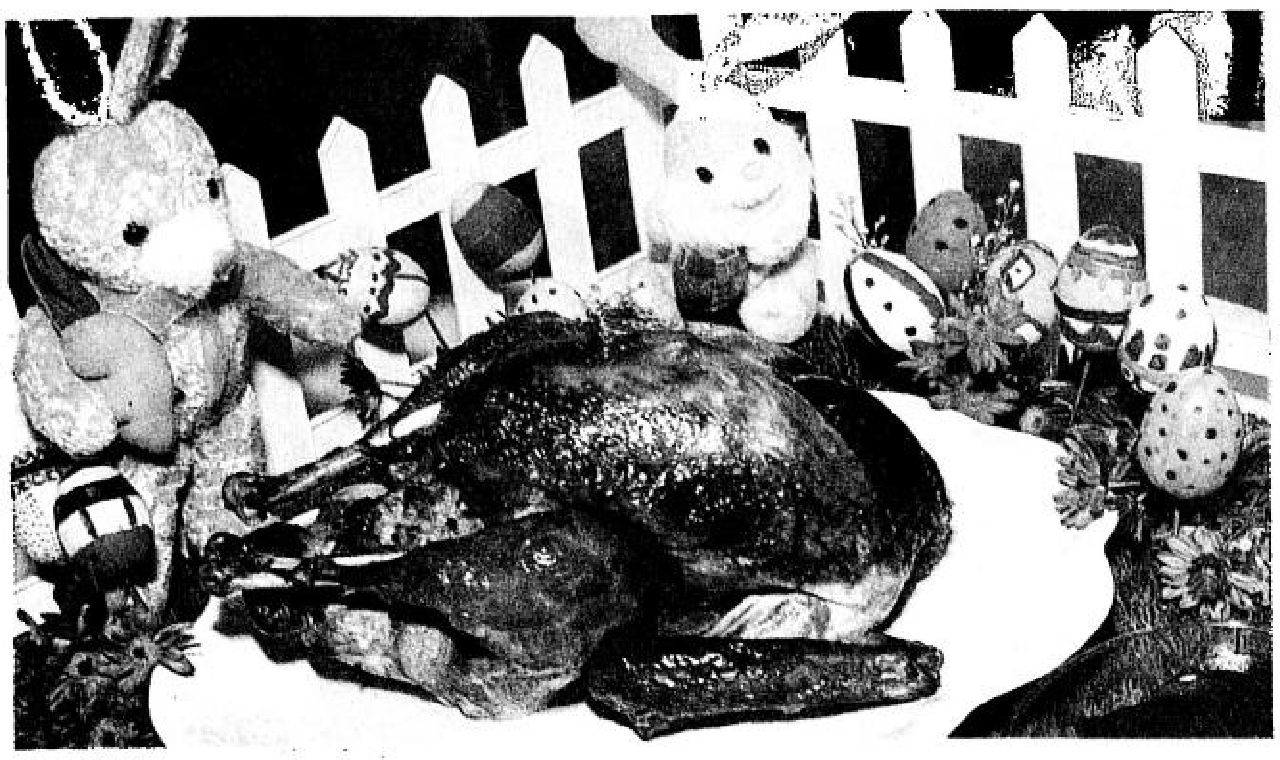
For details, text DINE and send to 386 or visit T.G.I.Friday's (Glorietta 3, Robinsons Place Manila, Alabang Town Center, Hotel Rembrandt in Quezon City and Brickroad, Sta. Lucia East); Italianni's (Glorietta IV, Alabang Town Center, SM City Bicutan, Greenbelt 2, Greenhills, Libis, Tomas Morato and Gateway Mall), and Outback Restaurant (Libis, Glorietta IV and Alabang Town Center).

New branch opens

SUPERBOWL of China opens at the 3/L of Gateway Mall in Araneta Center, Cubao. The Gateway Mall outlet is Super Bowl of China's ninth branch.

Other branches are located at the Megastrip of SM Megamall; Jupiter Street in Makati City; Glorietta 4 in Ayala Center; Chefs Avenue in Festival Mall, Alabang; 2/L of SM City North Edsa; Eastwood City Walk 2 in Libis; G/F SM City in Fairview and The Promenade in Greenhills.

Soon to open are branches on Tomas Morato, Quezon City and in Blue Wave, Marikina. Call Super Bowl of China-Gateway at 9139430/9694. Call 7472125 for franchising.



EASTER TURKEY
Celebrate Easter Sunday with a moist US Roast Turkey with your choice of stuffing from Aurelio's Catering. Chef Eli Aurelio's Roast Turkey comes with cranberry sauce, mashed potato, corn, giblet gravy and a choice of meat, apple and apricot or oyster stuffing. Call 7267321, 7269329, 7217952 or 0920-9201883.

No-meat favorites

Seafood Bundle
(4) Bottomless NESTEA Iced Tea
(2) Tuna Caesar Salad

SHAKEY'S brings you the Best Catch This Season. A seafood feast for four features the Shakey's no-meat favorites, bundled especially for this season: a large thin-crust Fridays Special, two Tuna Caesar Salads, four orders of the new Shrimp Chowder, and four servings of bottomless iced tea. For only P599, diners save P159. The promo is available in all Shakey's restaurants for dine-in customers until April 30.

Call 5338000.

Experience China in five days

EAT your way to a discovery of what makes China's different regions distinctive and interesting. Zhongnanhai Chinese Bistro, or ZNH for short, takes you "Around China in 5 Days" with its special lunch set menus for a party of four (minimum), at P288+ per person. Monday is "In Beijing," Tuesday is "Shanghai Noon," Wednesday is "At Hong Kong Harbour," Thursday is "Turning Cantonese" and Friday is "Savor Szechuan."

ZNH also gives you enough reasons to visit this Lenten season with its extensive meat-less selection. You can try such bestsellers as Spinach Seafood Soup (Hong-Kong style), Braised Shredded Garoupa Soup with Vegetables (Shanghai style), Steamed Garoupa Fillet in Minced Bean (Hong Kong style), Hot Pot Pan-fried Butter Prawns with Sotanghon (Shanghai style), Hot Pot Braised Eggplant with Fish Fillet in Chili Sauce, Fried Noodles with Seafood in X. O. Sauce (Hong Kong style) and Vegetable Rice "Shanghai Style."

Other meatless treats are Baked Crab Shell with Seafood (Hong Kong style), Stir-fried Fresh Local Scallops and Cuttlefish with Vegetables in X.O. Sauce (Hong-Kong style), Sweet and Sour Fish Fillet (Beijing style), Deep-fried Garoupa Fillet in Honey Pepper Sauce (Hong Kong style), Pan-friend Fresh Prawns in Special Soya Sauce (Hong Kong style), Sautéed Shrimp with Spicy Sauce (Szechuan style), and Steamed Black Cod (gindara) with Black Bean Sauce (Shanghai style).

Zhongnanhai Chinese Bistro is at the G/F, Greenbelt 2, Ayala Center, Makati City

Call 7581111).

Gourmet Classes with Chef Dennis Hipolito
#137 9th Street corner Balete Drive, New Manila, Quezon City
About Chef Dennis: Dean's List graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY/Food Stylist/* Owner of Joconde Cakes/* Took over classes from the Famed Gourmet, Maur Aquino Lichauco in New Manila/*Trained under the tutelage of World Pastry Cup Champion En Ming Hsu of the Ritz Carlton Chicago (a Four Seasons Hotel), Dan Budd of Park Avenue Café Chicago, Cake Stylist Betty Van Norstrand, Food Stylist Dolores Custer and other instructors in the Philippines

April 2, 2005: MOUTH WATERING DESSERTS (Great with Coffee) NEW CLASS Almond Toffee Crunch Cake, Funnel Cakes, Tofu Cheesecake, Toll House Cookies with a Twist, Sinful Peanut Butter Scones-P1600

April 9, 2005: SWEET YEAST BREADS (The Most Requested Bread Class) Ensaymada, Cheese Rolls, Honey and Milk Bread, Moist Sticky Buns, Potato Bread-P1600

April 16, 2005: GOODIES FOR THE SWEET TOOTHED (Irresistible!) NEW CLASS Authentic Black Forest Torte, Toblerone Cake, Baklava, Buttery ChocNut Cookies, Sticky Date Cake with Toffee Sauce-P1600

April 23, 2005: GIFTS FROM THE SWEET KITCHEN (Great for Gift Giving) NEW CLASS Ube Mousse Torte, Kit Kat Cake, Toblerone Soufflé, Pistachio Cream Cake, (Violet Crumble) Sponge Toffee Streusel Butter Loaf-P1600

April 30, 2005: IRRESISTIBLE SWEETS (Bake These for Rave Reviews) NEW CLASS Chocolate Truffle Torte, Mango Cream Tart, Chunky Monkey Loaf Cake (Chocolate, Banana, Coconut and Macadamia Nut Loaf), Double Chocolate Sandwich Cookies, Quick Cream Cheese Glazed Cinnamon Buns-P1600

*CLASSES ARE: 1:00PM-4:30PM, (Limited Seats Available)
*Classes include: Ingredients, Recipe Hand Outs, and Product Shares
*For Inquiries and Reservations: **Please call or text 0917-8486656** or **email us at gourmetpastry@aol.com.** LOOK for **GIRARD** or **YVETTE.**

Egg hunt for DSWD wards and orphans

PRICESMART Philippines Inc., local subsidiary of PriceSmart Inc., joins the children of Ahon Center of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Haven for Children, Tahanan Outreach Projects and Services, and the Asociacion de Damas de Filipinas Inc., in celebrating Easter Sunday.

The event will include an Easter Egg Hunt, games, jungle gym, balloons, trampolines, costumed characters, and more. Kids will also get goodie bags. Food and beverages will be served.

The Easter Egg Hunt begins at 3:30 p.m., March 27 at PriceSmart, Aseana Bradco Avenue, Aseana Business Park Boulevard 2000, Baclaran, Parañaque City.

MANGO Graham

Two cakes for Lent

THE FUNNEL Cake Factory offers two new funnel cake toppings—Tuna Cheese and Mango Graham—for the coming Lent and summer.

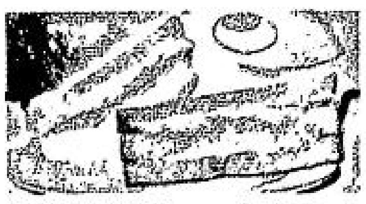
Gina See, owner of the shop, says the Tuna Cheese Funnel Cake can even be a meal in itself. Cheddar cheese and flaked tuna are sprinkled on top of a piping hot cake.

Mango Graham is topped with freshly cubed mangoes, crushed Graham, and cream.

See says for the whole month of March they have the "Buy 4, get 1 Free."

Funnel Cake Factory is located at the Fort Strip, Global City. It is open 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Monday to Saturday, and 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Sunday.

Seafood meals



MINISTOP'S brown loaf tuna and tuna and egg sandwich

THIS LENTEN season, Ministop brings an array of seafood choices.

Pasta lovers can have the Tuna Baked Macaroni, a blend of cheese and tuna tomato sauce, for a satisfying and affordable meal at only P42.

A light yet filling repast is the Brown Loaf Tuna or Tuna and Egg Sandwich at P30 and P22, respectively.

Another Ministop Lenten pick is the Spicy Sardines Kariman. The crunchy treat comes in a special Lenten variety while still priced at P20.

The Lenten treats are available until April 3 in more than a hundred Ministop outlets within Metro Manila.

Easter lunch for families

THE PALM Court Café at the Manila Diamond Hotel offers the Easter Family lunch buffet at P850 per person on March 27.

Kids can also enjoy face painting and Easter egg hunting.

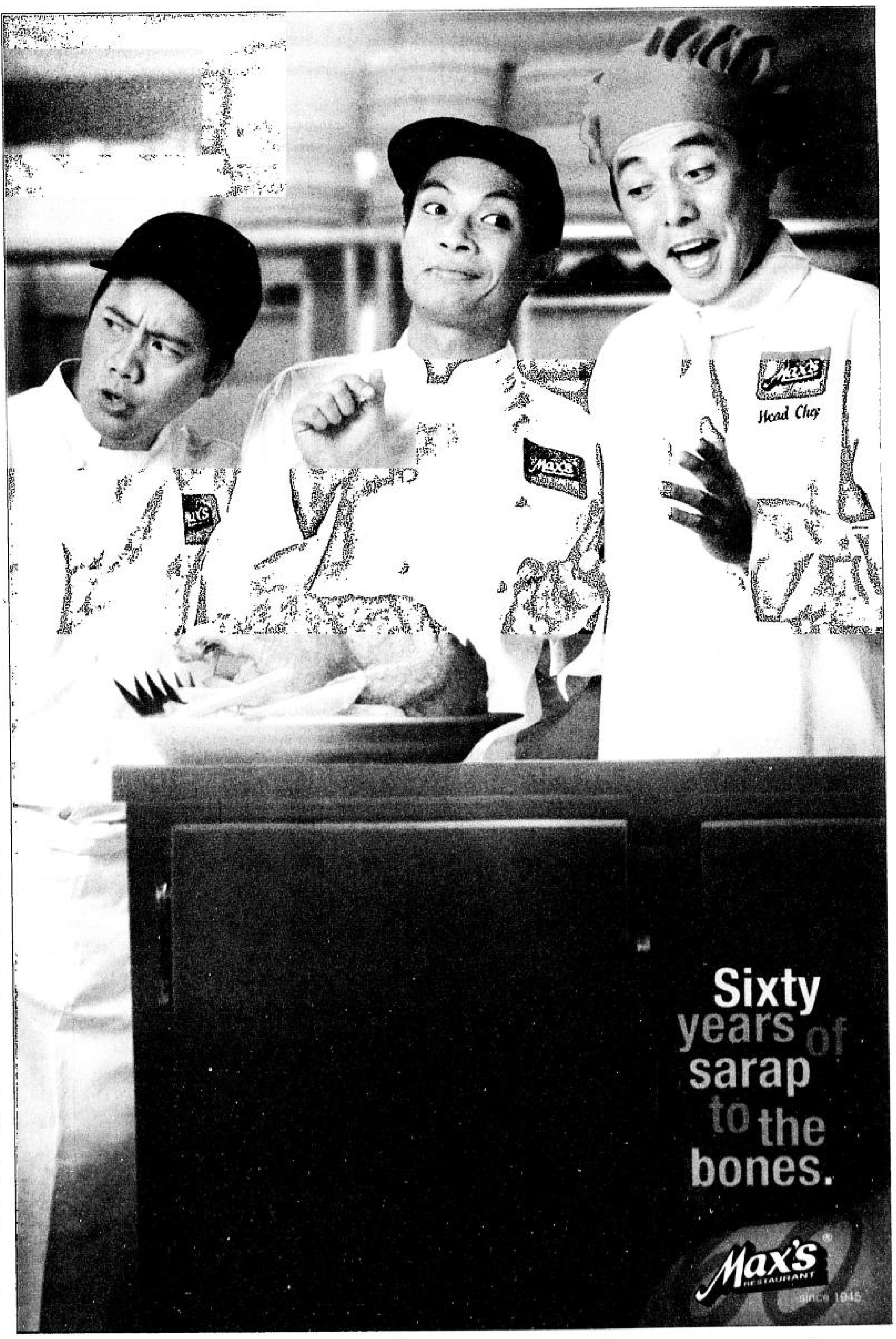
The restaurant also has the all-you-can-eat Seafood Friday night buffet at P950 per person.

The seafood dinner features Tiger Shrimp Cocktail, Fresh Oysters, Lobsters Terrine, Bouillabaisse Marseillaise, Shrimp Tempura, Roasted Gindara, Baked Whole Salmon and more.

Palm Court also has a daily international buffet featuring fresh oysters, sashimi, cold cuts, Caesar salad, roast prime ribs, roast whole turkey, shrimp tempura, plus authentic Spanish and Oriental cuisine.

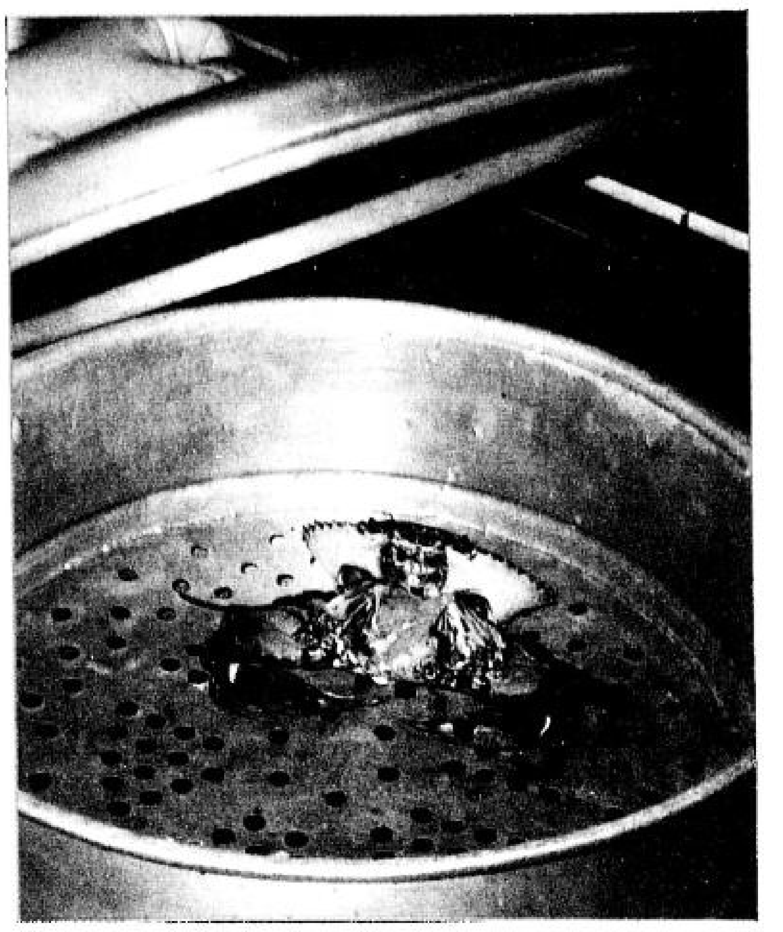
Full lunch or dinner is P850 per person. The dessert buffet that includes cakes, fresh fruit and ice cream is P350 per person.

Children 6-10 years old get a 50-percent discount and kids 5 years old and below are free.



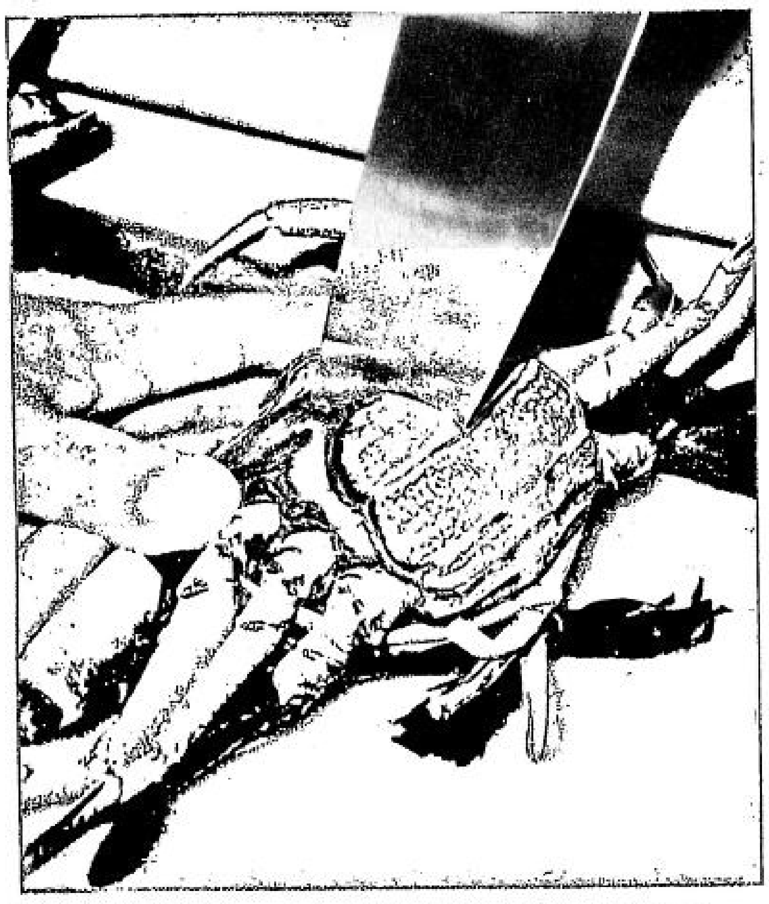
2 **BREAK** off the shells, first the bottom belly flap and then the top shell. Remove and discard the sponge-like gills.

3 **RINSE** the outer shells. Clean out all the gray and green and spongy stuff (if it looks gross, get rid of it).



4 **STEAM** for 10-15 minutes

Easy-does-it Lenten treat



1 **PREPARE** the crab by placing it upside down on a cutting board and striking a knife lengthwise on the belly, hard enough to kill it. This cut is important. Be sure to make it deep enough.

From page C1

new, enticing dishes.

Here's a recipe for one of them—a special baked crab that makes for an exciting meal this Lent and requires little time to prepare, leaving you more moments for reflection and meditation.

Crabs have firm and sweet flesh. Chefs recommend buying them fresh and live if they are to be enjoyed at their best.

Amador Cruz, executive chef of Blue Bay Buffet by the Bay, says your nose and eyes will help you buy the right product. Crabs should smell briny fresh, and look bright and clean. Shells should be hard (except for soft-shelled crabs) and moist. Live crabs should be active, moving their legs when touched.

Choose crabs that feel heavy for their size.

The two surest guides to quality are the crab's weight and the condition of its shell. The meat of the female crab is preferable to that of the male; females have more flesh, male crabs yield little meat. Reject lightweight crabs.

Male crabs can be distinguished from female crabs by the smaller tail flap on the undersides.

These days, crabs sell from P150-P200 per kilo depending on weight.

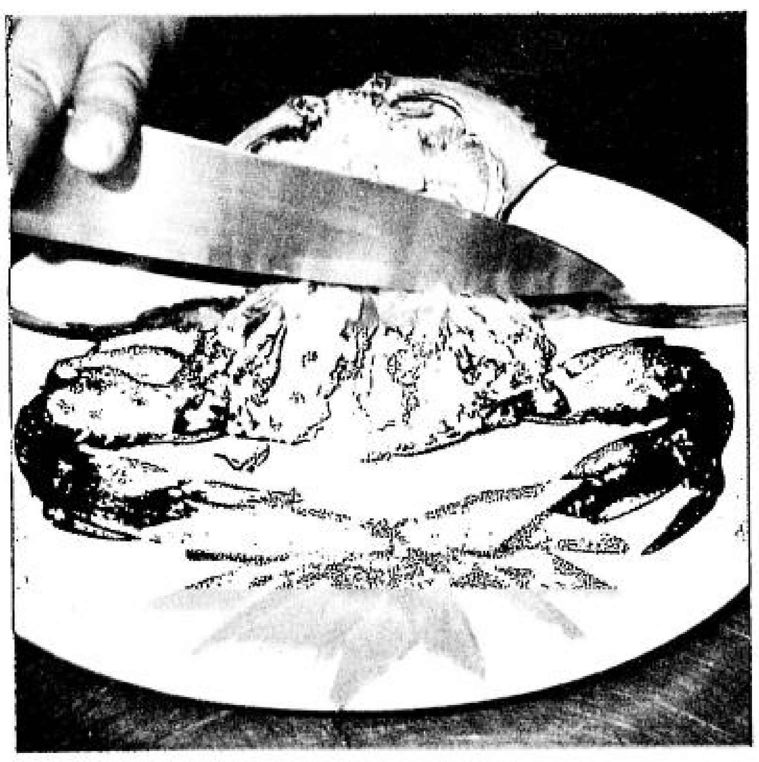
Blue Bay Buffet by the Bay (tels. 4007437, 5250514) is on South Road (T.M. Kalaw) corner Parade St., Luneta, Rizal Park, Manila. It offers a daily buffet of continental dishes.

Lenten Baked Crab

Ingredients:

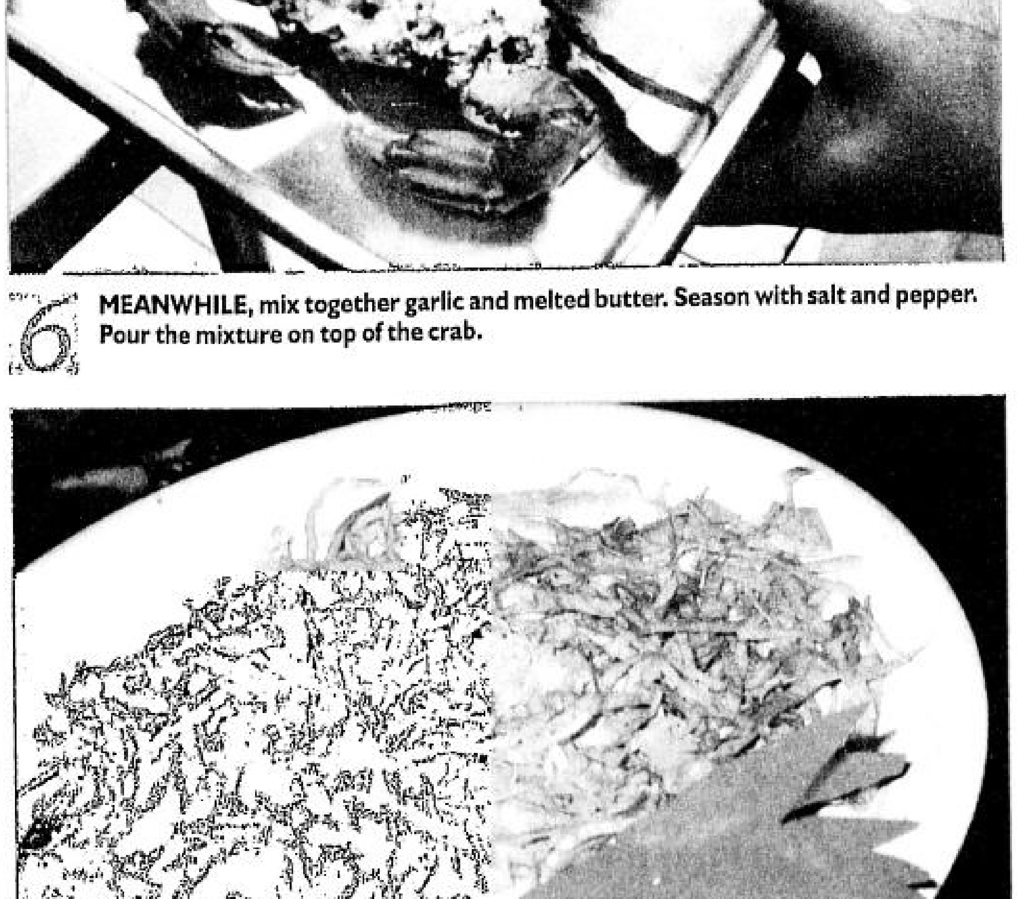
½ k crabs
½ c unsalted butter, melted
100 g garlic, chopped
pinch of salt
pinch of ground pepper

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph



5 **BREAK** crab into four parts.

6 **MEANWHILE,** mix together garlic and melted butter. Season with salt and pepper. Pour the mixture on top of the crab.



7 **BAKE** crab in a preheated 350°F oven for 15-20 minutes. Before serving, garnish plate with shredded lettuce.

BEDROCKIN' EASTER

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FOIE Gras with Mangoes

A Bellevue birthday

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

This time, our resident rescuer got out of the kitchen and left everything up to her dream team while she enjoyed high tea with the view of Manila Bay

I TURNED 18 last week (alright, maybe 18 is pushing it!) and, for a change, decided that I ought to be pampered.

With this in mind, I checked into the Manila Diamond Hotel at lunchtime to meet with my dream team to plan the perfect dinner at Le Bellevue, the hotel's top floor restaurant that has been and will always be one of my favorites. It's a restaurant that also happens to be rated as one of the best in the country by the Philippine Tatler. Aside from exquisite food, the ambience is quite extraordinary. Sipping champagne while watching the sunset by the bay is something I've always lived for!

Stroke of genius

I met with Alex Zuzon, the ever reliable restaurant operations manager, for my table arrangements, then with chef Raimund Braun to orchestrate the food. In my mind, I had it all figured out. I wanted an appetizer buffet, which turned out to be a stroke of genius as it allowed room for Pinoy time, having kept the early birds happy and amused while waiting for the rest of the clan.

Main course was to be ordered from the a la carte menu to treat each guest to whatever fancied their palates. To finish, a dessert buffet to pack all those unnecessary calories.

As I always do, I let the chef decide on what he wanted to serve at both buffet spreads for no one knows his food better than him, and I knew that with chef Braun, I was in very good hands. With no stone of detail unturned, I left everything up to the Bellevue team while I enjoyed high tea with a view of Manila Bay and ships

A BELLEVUE/ D3

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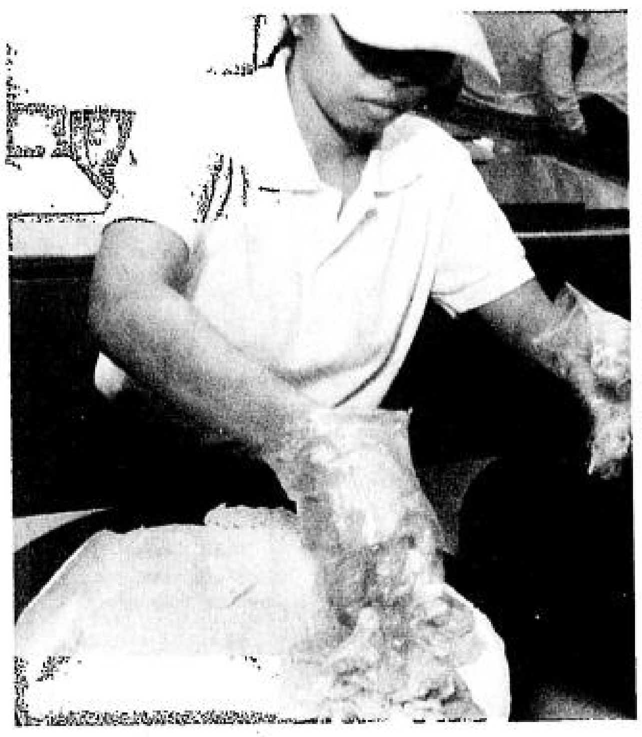


SPECIALIST whips up a savoury crepe.

HAM and Mushroom savoury crepe

HAZELNUT Banana Chocolate

Crepes for Lent and other seasons

CHOCOLATE Temptation

By Linda B. Bolido

IT IS NAMED Crepes & Cream but it may as well be called Crepes to Go.

Yes, even crepes have gone the fastfood way. You don't need to go to a fancy place anymore and wait for the almost paper-thin pancake to be served with all the formality of a sit-down meal to satisfy a craving. Now you can take it with you and eat it the way you would your favorite ice cream.

In fact, that's what the cream is all about. At Crepes & Cream, they serve you the pancake in a cone topped with your favorite ice cream flavor. If you only want the ice cream, that's fine, too. They can scoop up your favorite "ice" just as easily. Or you can have a sundae or a milkshake.

This new place at the Podium, run by the same people behind the UCC chain of coffee shops, is the first franchise outside its Singapore base.

"Sweet" crepes range in price from P95 to P185. The lineup includes Chocolate Temptation (P95), which has dark and creamy chocolate ice cream, chocolate brownie bits and chocolate chips wrapped in a sweet crepe topped with roasted almond flakes, whipped cream and drizzled with chocolate sauce.

Crepes and Cream Delight (P95) has Cookies and Cream ice cream and crushed Oreo cookies wrapped in a sweet crepe surrounded by chunky Oreo cookies, topped with roasted almond flakes, whipped cream and drizzled with chocolate sauce.

Crazy for Strawberries (P145) has strawberry ice cream, fresh strawberry cubes and strawberry chocolate chips wrapped in a sweet crepe, topped with roasted almond flakes, whipped cream and drizzled with sweet strawberry sauce.

Mini Banana Bonkers (P175) has strawberry, chocolate and vanilla ice creams all wrapped in a sweet crepe topped with freshly sliced bananas, whipped cream, roasted almond flakes and drizzled with chocolate and sweet berry sauce.

Cappuchoco175 (P125) has Cappuccino ice cream, chocolate brownie bits and crushed Oreo cookies wrapped in a sweet crepe, topped with roasted almond flakes, whipped cream, chocolate chips and drizzled with chocolate sauce.

And, as it is with crepe now, the pancake is not just an indulgence for the sweet-toothed anymore. You can have a heavy *merienda* or light meal from the "Savoury" lineup.

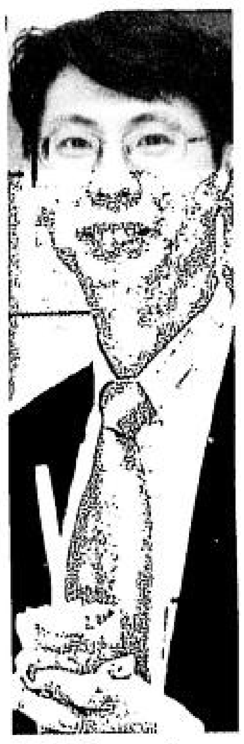
In fact, they even have varieties suitable for the Lenten season like Kani Mango, Creamy Smoked Milkfish, Spicy Tuna Onion, Cheesy Spicy Tuna Onion and an All-vegetable Crepe (mushroom, lettuce and tomatoes drizzled with mushroom sauce, P95).

Other "savoury crepes" include Mushroom Ham, BLT (bacon-lettuce-tomato), Chicken Chipolata, Smoked Salmon and Chicken Salad. Prices range from P95-P145.

Crepes & Cream is at the ground floor of the Podium in Ortigas Center.

The first overseas outlet of this Singapore-based company not only serves sweet paper-thin pancakes but filling varieties as well

EILING Go, senior executive for business development of Apex Pal, Singaporean principal of Crepes & Cream

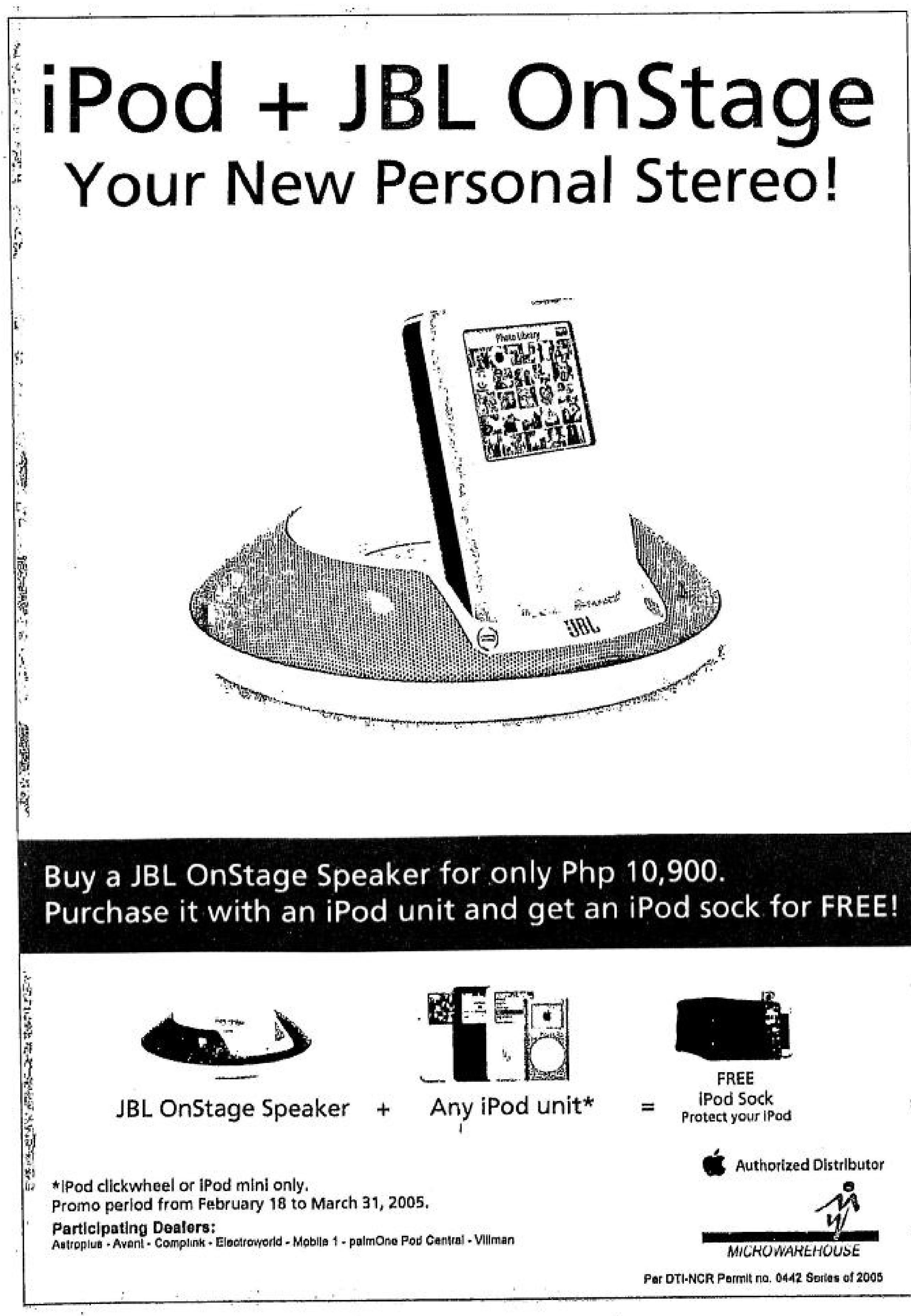


JASON Leong Say Boon, International Enterprise Singapore's center director for Manila

CREPES & Cream local franchise holder, Hubert Young, who is also behind the UCC Coffee shop chain in Manila

A CUSTOMER with her crepe-to-go

CC customers



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THE KING and I

THE DIAMOND dream team—Wilma Advincula, chef Raimund Braun and Alex Zuzon

A Bellevue birthday

From page D1

cruising before me.

What a spread!

Finally, the time had come and it was half past seven in the evening. The appetizer buffet was ready and what a spread it was! Vegetable and Cheese Terrine—a layered concoction of cream cheese, honey dew melon and tomato marmalade drizzled with balsamic glaze and topped with crushed cashew nuts—this alone made choosing Le Bellevue all worthwhile. Excellent! Equally delicious were the Lemon Scented Beef Carpaccio, Chilled Smoked Salmon Wrapped in Warm Potato Pancakes and the Baked Oysters. For that refreshing touch were salads of Cherry tomatoes and Avocados and another one of Garden Greens with Baked Potato Chips, Grilled Mediterranean Vegetables and Fried Shallots.

Before the main courses were served, upon the insistence of chef Braun, we had a demitasse of Saffron Scented Infused Cream of Scallops and Tomato Dill Fondant. We were warned that not having this soup would mean missing half of our life. As always, the chef knew best and we had to agree to his claim that it is one of the best soups known to man.

Main event

As though what we had for starters weren't enough, we moved on to Pan Fried Sole in White Wine Sauce with Grapes and Bacon, Porcini Dust Rubbed Rib of Beef, Roast Duck Breast and Seared Goose Liver... the list of what we had went on and on. And I, the well-mannered celebrant, went from table to table to dip my fork into everyone else's plate. Everything was delicious—with no exception!

It was time for dessert and while I was at it, I realized why I'd always loved the Bellevue. Customer service is exceptional! For what they serve and the portions, the price is very reasonable, and the view, absolutely breathtaking.

Hearty laugh

And the chef, what have I to say about chef Braun? I know many chefs and I love them dearly for what they are, but this one is different. He makes you feel that every day is your birthday. He takes the time to talk, laugh and enjoy your guests with you, making them feel so extraordinarily special. His demeanor contradicts the notion many have about foreign chefs, considering that the resume that backs this man up is a mighty impressive one. Simply put, he laughs heartily, cooks lovingly and serves you gladly. These are the very reasons the Diamond experience is unlike any other!

I'm not one who loves to celebrate my own birthday. However, this year was different. God has been so good! As I celebrated with my family, I could not help the urge to share a piece of that evening with you, my readers, who have become like family to me too. So I asked chef Braun to share his recipes of my favorites from his collection so that you may cook and share fine food with all those you love, just like I did two Mondays ago.

Pan Seared Foie Gras with Roasted Figs, Mangoes and Red Wine Syrup

60 g duck liver
20 g dried fig
10 g shallots
5 g sugar
30 ml red wine vinegar
1 g basil leaf
10 ml olive oil
+ 10 ml olive oil for frying
10 ml brandy
½ g black pepper
½ pc of mango fillet

Heat up olive oil and sauté shallots. Deglaze pan with red wine vinegar, reduce. Season with sugar, salt, black pepper. Arrange mango slices and set on a plate. Cook figs in water till soft, dry, marinate with brandy and grill. Cut fig into two and set on the plate. Pan-fry the liver and place on top of the fig. Drizzle with red wine vinegar syrup and shallots. Garnish with basil.

Expect more of chef Braun's recipes in the next two weeks.

For comments or suggestions, text 0917-8399888.

TABLE setting at Le Bellevue

Baking, cooking classes

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts offers the following classes:

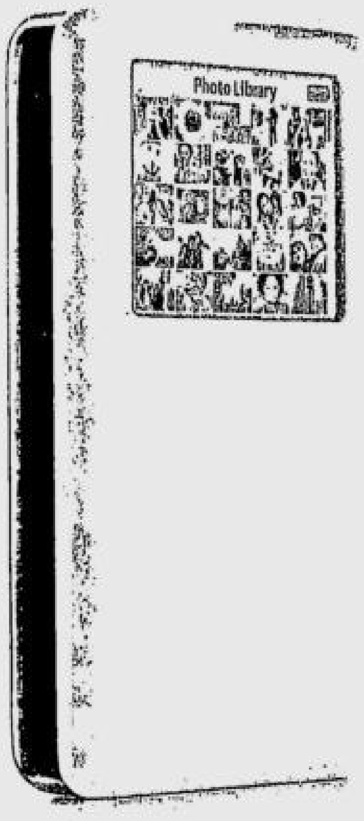
March 18, Chocolate 2005 (all new)—Caramel Chocolate Cake, Delicious Chocolate Bread Pudding, Best Ever Chocolate Roulade with White Chocolate Cream, Hazelnut Chocolate Cake with Custard Sauce, Home-made Truffles (three kinds)

March 19, Pasta 101-2—Arrabiata, Pesto, Neapolitan, Alfredo with Mixed Mushrooms and Four Cheeses, Al Amatriciana, Authentic Lasagna al Forno, Black Pasta

March 21, USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Beef, Australian Lamb and Wine Promotion 2005; Cooking US Beef at Half the Price: Learn how to roast the most unusual beef cuts—delicious and far cheaper than your regular roast cuts, plus succulent lamb recipes, too—all new—Brown Sugar Glazed Angus Beef Belly, Whole Marinated Hanger Tender Roast (two Gravies), Orange Beef (top blade), Cured Beef Tamale with Onion Jam (top blade), Whole Roasted Lamb Leg in Garlic and Herbs Mediterranean Style with four Sauces and Home-made Mint Sauce; side dishes. Sponsored by PTC and Happy Living

March 23, Savory and Sweet Cheesecakes (all new)—Sweet: The Best No-bake Cheese Cake with Three Sauces (Chocolate, White Chocolate and Caramel), The Best Baked Cheesecake with Vanilla Cream and six home-made fruit toppings, Diego's Tofu Cheesecake with Home-made Green Tea Ice Cream and Wasabi Whipped Cream; Savory: Smoked Salmon Cheesecake, Shrimp and Caviar Cheesecake, Blue Cheesecake with Fresh Fruits

Call 9289296, 9273008, 6335162, 0917-8399888.



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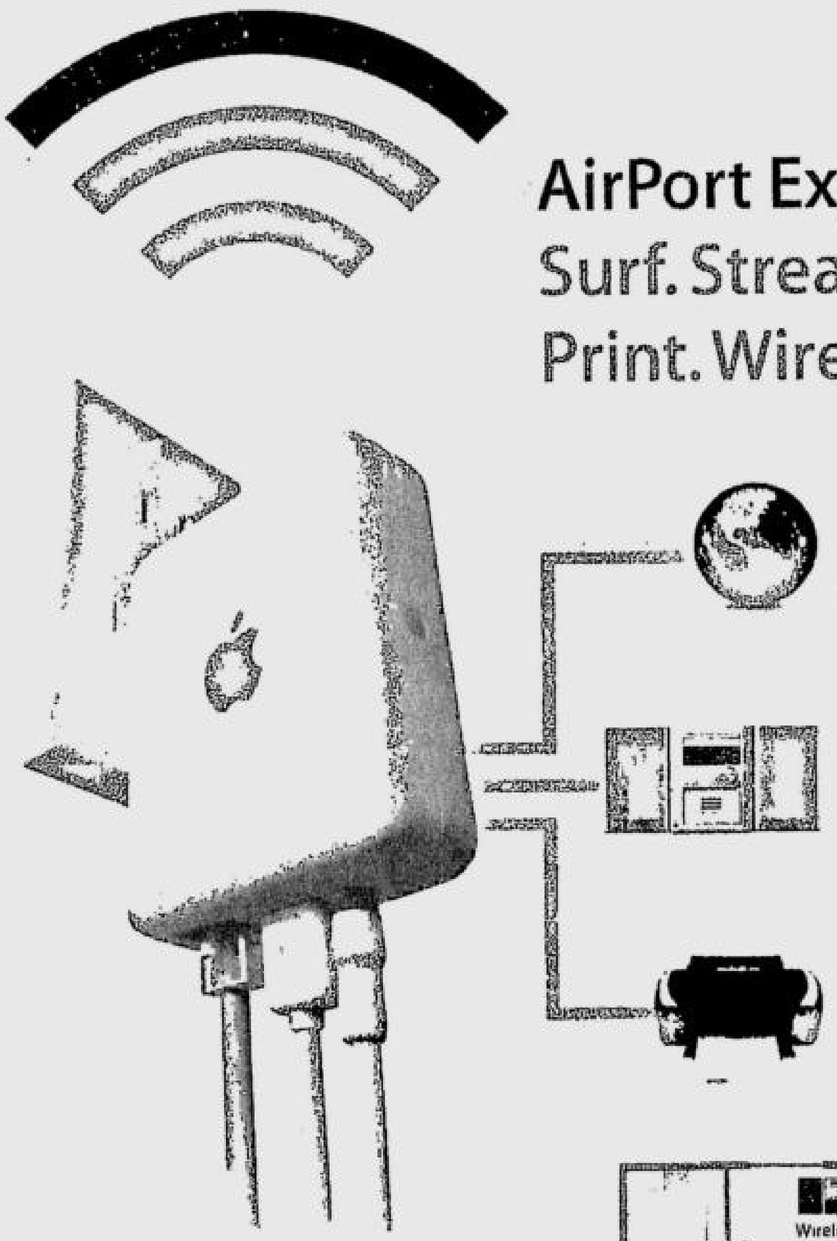

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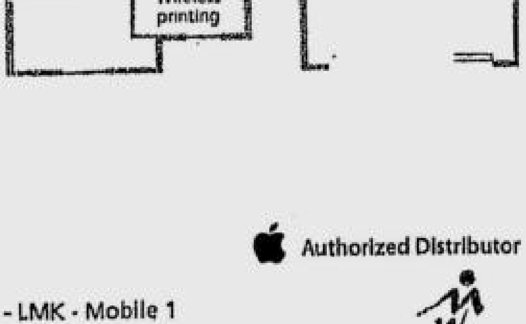

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Have diploma, will dine

BAKUIT Teh at Edsa Shangri-La's Summer Place

DINING OUT

THE HYATT Regency Manila has prepared a special prom night and graduation ball package. For a minimum of 100 persons, Hyatt offers a choice of two buffets and two set menus. Buffet Menu I offers a variety of appetizers, a salad bar, hot main courses, desserts and freshly brewed coffee or tea for P107,650. Buffet Menu II includes appetizers, soup, a salad bar, hot main courses, and desserts for P119,500. In excess of 100, every additional guest will be charged P885 for Buffet Menu I, and P975 for Buffet Menu II. Set Menu I is available for P96,950 while Set Menu II costs P114,500. In excess of 100, each additional guest will be charged P830 for Set Menu I, and P930 for Set Menu II. Call 8331234 local 8067-8071, or e-mail Manila.Banquets@hyattintl.com.

HATS off to Class 2005 at Edsa Shangri-La

THE RICHMONDE Hotel offers a special treat for graduates. They will be entitled to a special discount of 25 percent in the lunch buffet Sunday-Friday or a la carte meal for a minimum of P2,000 at the Richmonde Grill March 19-April 17 (except on Easter Sunday, March 27). Graduates have to present their diploma or school ID and graduation rites program. Call 6387777 local 3409.

EDSA SHANGRI-LA has a special offer for graduates until March 31. With 10 guests and availing of the special lunch and dinner buffets and set menus, a graduate dines for free. Graduates have a choice among the Garden Café with its Asian and Continental favorites, the Italian Paparazzi, and the Summer Palace with its Cantonese set lunch and dinner. They can also enjoy Japanese dishes at the Nishiki's lunch buffet of Japanese dishes on March 20 and 27. Call 6347373 or 6338888 local 2738 and 2739.

MANILA PAVILION Hotel offers graduates and their families two special treats. At the Rotisserie, a specially prepared set menu is available for lunch and dinner at P800++ per person. Diners will also receive a special room promo voucher that entitles them to an overnight stay in a deluxe room for only US$70 net. At the Café Coquilla, a group of 6 will pay only for 5. The café showcases a cuisine of different themes every night. The offer is available 6:30-10:30 p.m. at P750++ per person. These offers are good until the end of the month. Call 5261212 local 2505 (Rotisserie) and 2318 (Café Coquilla).

MAKATI Shangri-La's Red congratulates graduates by treating them to a delectable meal—gratis! The graduate has to bring five friends or family members to enjoy this red offer. Call 8400884.

MANILA Diamond Hotel's Palm Court Cafe offers a special treat for graduates and their family and friends until April 15. Every group of six buffet diners gets a complimentary cake for the graduate. Every group of eight gets the graduate a gift certificate for lunch or dinner buffet for one person. A group of 30 diners gets the graduate a free superior room for one night.

CASA ARMAS offers graduation packages to graduates and their families. The packages are priced P3,500+ (5-7 persons); P5,500+ (8-10 persons); and P9,900+ (12-15 persons). Each package comes with a free bottle of Sta. Carolina wine. Casa Armas has outlets at 3/L Greenbelt 3 (tel. 7574996), G/F The Podium (6873370) and Jupiter Street (8973605).

THE RICHMONDE Hotel Graduation Promo

CHEF'S Specialty: Water Eel with Bean Curd, Double-boiled Native Chicken with Chinese Herbs, Sautéed Norwegian Squid with X.O. and Chili Sauce

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